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THE MARRIAGE OF HOSEA IN RELATION TO HIS TEACHINGS

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BOSTON UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL

Thesis

THE MARRIAGE OF HOSEA IN RELATION TO HIS TEACHINGS

by

Irene Parish Scarborough
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CHARLES W. BOND

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to study Hosea's marriage, to evaluate its influence on his teachings, and to discover, if possible, the prophetic contributions coming from Hosea because of his unusual marriage relationship.

The method of the paper will be developed by a study of the critical problems of the book of Hosea; an investigation of the biography of the man Hosea; the description of Hosea's marriage, and its interpretation together with the opinions of modern scholars on the subject; a statement of the major teachings of the book of Hosea; a discussion of the influence of his marriage on the major teachings of his book; and a summary of the prophetic contributions resulting from Hosea's faithfulness to Gomer.

Although most of our information concerning the problem, Hosea's marriage and its influence on his teaching, comes from the book of Hosea, it nevertheless affords us ample material for such a study. The importance of the critical problems thus becomes the more evident.

CRITICAL PROBLEMS

A. The Date of Hosea.

Although there is uncertainty as to the exact date of the beginning and the end of Hosea's prophesy, yet it is reasonable to believe that he began his work

before the middle of the eighth century. There are several indications of this.

1. In the first chapter of Hosea we are told that the word of Jehovah came to him in the days of Jeroboam, son of Nebat, king of Israel.

Jeroboam, son of Nebat, was king of Israel from 908 to 884 B.C. He was the son of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, king of Israel.

That his ministry extended through the reign of all these kings would seem quite impossible for "From the beginning

of the reign of Jeroboam to the beginning of that of Zedekiah, according to the now usually received chronology

there is a period of fifty-two years, and Jeroboam came to the throne a few years before the accession of Jeroboam.

This first verse of Hosea is not to be relied upon as definitive information for it is recognized as the writing of some Jewish editor who later compiled the text, and arranged the wording according to his own dictates. However, it is

Chapter I

CRITICAL PROBLEMS

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A. The Date of Hosea.

Although there is uncertainty as to the exact dates of the beginning and the end of Hosea's prophecy, yet it is reasonable to believe that he began his work before the middle of the eighth century. There are several indications of this fact:

1. In the first verse of Hosea we are told that the word of Jehovah came unto Hosea "in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah and in the days of Jeroboam, the son of Joash, king of Israel." That his ministry extended through the reigns of all these rulers would seem quite impossible for "from the beginning of the reign of Uzziah to the beginning of that of Hezekiah, according to the now usually received chronology there is a period of fifty-two years, and Jeroboam came to his throne a few years before the accession of Uzziah."¹ This first verse of Hosea is not to be relied upon as definite information for it is recognized as the writing of some Judean editor who later compiled the text, and arranged the wording according to his own dictates. However, it is

¹ Robertson, International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Vol. III, p. 350.

in part consistent with the facts and offers a partial solution of the date. Harper says that this first verse may be translated into dates and reads: between ca. 785 and ca. 715, reckoned by Southern kings; between ca. 780 and ca. 745¹ reckoned by Northern kings. If genuine, this would mean that Hosea's work began at least before 745 B. C., and continued probably through 722 B. C.

2. An important indication of the date is the promise of Jehovah to avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu.² These words probably refer to the future downfall. Jeroboam was the great grandson of Jehu; his son Zechariah, who could not hold the throne longer than six months, was murdered, and thus ended the dynasty of Jehu. According to this section of history we may place the beginning of Hosea's ministry, shortly before the death of Jeroboam, which came about approximately in 743 B. C.

Driver reviews the background for the prophecy of Hosea, and includes in his discussion the chronological table,³ commonly accepted as significant for its dates in relation to Hosea's ministry. The table is as follows:

786 Jeroboam II	737 Pekahiah
746 Zechariah	735 Pekah
745 Shallum	733 Hoshea
745 Menahem	722 Fall of Samaria

1 Harper, Amos and Hosea, p. 203 (Hereafter cited Harper, AH)

2 Hosea 1:4

3 Driver, Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament, p. 300. (Hereafter, IOLT)

Harper says that it is certain that Hosea was preaching in 734 B. C. because of the threat concerning Jezreel (1:4) which must have been uttered before the fall of Jehu's house, that is, before the death of Jeroboam II. He maintains that the prophet's marriage and the birth of his eldest son must be understood to have preceded, if 1:4 was uttered in 743. He continues his suggestions as to the date of Hosea's preaching by saying: "That he lived in the midst of the period of anarchy which followed the death of Jeroboam II (i.e. 743-736) seems to be shown by the utterance found in 7:7 (perhaps also 7:8ff., 8:4), which reflects the condition of things in this period (ZECHARIAH, son of Jeroboam II, is assassinated within six months by Shallum, son of Jabesh, who, in turn is killed after a month by Menahem, son of Gadi. He reigns about six years, paying tribute to Assyria for his protection. His son, Pekahiah, after a reign of about two years, is assassinated by Pekah, son of Remaliah (736 B. C.)."

There is little difficulty in determining the dates of chapters 4 through 14 for they reflect the confusion of the times after the death of Jeroboam. It is a period of hopeless anarchy in which the people defy moral law, kill and steal, to such an extent that wicked-

1 Harper, AH, p. cxli.

ness prevails.¹ The court is a source of evil, and the kings cannot maintain their thrones.² Here we are reminded of the violence and bloodshed so characteristic of the reigns of the kings following Jeroboam.

3. The Syro-Ephraimitic war of Pekah and Rezon against Judah is not mentioned,³ and this indicates that the prophet was not ministering during the period from 734-733 B. C. It could hardly be argued that Hosea would not be sufficiently interested even to suggest the outcome of one of the most prominent events of the day, or to even allude to the war in any way.

Sellin says that he agrees with Alt who has pointed out that Hosea 5:8 - 6:6 refers to the Syro-Ephraimitic war, and that the role played by the Egyptians is suggested in 7:11; 9:3, 6; 11:5; 12:1. Accordingly, Sellin places the career of Hosea between 750 and 725 B. C.⁴ It would seem that these two authors read more into the text than can rightfully be accredited to Hosea.

Nevertheless, this is a later theory and it remains to be seen what evidences will develop to make this view authoritative.

S. L. Brown leans slightly in the direction of Alt, yet he finishes his discussion by saying that though

1 Hosea 4:1,2; 7:1

2 Hosea 7:3-7; 10:15

3 Isaiah 7; II Kings 15:37-38

4 Sellin, Introduction to the Old Testament (IOT) p. 158.

we cannot accept these conclusions with the same confidence as that with which they are given to us, owing to the obscurity of many of the allusions, it will be found that they make a good working hypothesis and to that extent¹ help us the better to understand Hosea's message.

Gray believes that the book implies no knowledge of the Syro-Ephraimitic war, and that we may infer that Hosea compiled his book before 735; the book, he says, contains the history of Hosea's life or the substance of his² teachings for some ten years at least.

4. Hosea refers to Gilead in 5:1; 6:8 and 12:11 as a city that works iniquity and is stained with blood. Harper tells us that in Hosea's day Gilead was a part of northern Israel; but in 734-733 B. C. Gilead and Naphtali passed under the yoke of Tiglathpileser. This would bring³ Hosea's work down as late perhaps as 725 B. C. Driver believes it doubtful that any of Hosea's prophecies date from the period after 734, the year in which Tiglathpileser deported the inhabitants of the trans-Jordanic region (II Kings 15:29) to Assyria. He says that Gilead is alluded to as Israelitish (6:8; 12:11; cf. 5:1) without any reference to a judgment having fallen upon it, nor is there any allusion

1 Brown, The Book of Hosea, (Hereafter HOS) p. 20.

2 Gray, A Critical Introduction to the Old Testament (Hereafter CIOT) p. 206.

3 Harper, AH, p. cxli

to Pekah's attack upon Judah in 735 B. C.¹ W. R. Smith considers it probable that the prophet was spared the crowning sorrow of seeing, with his own eyes, the fulfillment of the doom of the nation.²

5. If we compare Amos and Hosea we note the fact that in the earlier part of Hosea as well as in Amos there are signs of wealth and prosperity, with punishment to come in the future.³ But soon there is a great change and Hosea tells of the religious and political leaders, the downfall of monarchs, and of a prevailing chaos.

Hosea was the prophet of the northern kingdom under Jeroboam II and succeeding kings. It is clear that chapters 1, 2, and 3 belong to the reign of Jeroboam II, for they deal with a prosperous nation. Chapters 4 through 14 belong to the chaotic period which follows. We are certain that the dates for Hosea are approximately 743 B. C. and 734 B. C. How long before 743 Hosea may have prophesied we cannot say. Gray gives a few important suppositions which relate directly to the dating of Hosea.

"When the prophet's first child was born the house of Jehu was still on the throne; whether the other children were also born before the overthrow of that house is less

1 Driver, ILIT, p. 302.

2 W. Smith, The Prophets in Israel, and their place in History to the Close of the Eighth Century B. C. (PI) p. 156.

3 Hosea 2:5f., 9ff.

clear. In any case, we may assume that by the time of Jezreel's birth Hosea had already appeared as a public teacher denouncing, like Amos, inhumanity and attacking the reigning house which had been established. But the same narrative also records the birth of the next two children, with a hint that between the birth of the second and third something like three years elapsed. Consequently, something like five years at least lay between Hosea's marriage, something like four years at least between the birth of Jezreel and Hosea's teaching The interval may have been longer, for we have no reason to conclude that Hosea wrote the narrative immediately after Lo-Ammi's birth." (1)

B. Authorship and Authenticity.

Without much doubt the book of Hosea is the record of the prophet's own life and teaching. Perhaps he wrote the record and his prophetic poems at the same time, at least this is probable. It is not surprising that the book has been somewhat modified by later editors. Hosea is a prophet of the northern kingdom, in the eighth century, and as such his writings were subject to the revisions of Judean editors of the southern kingdom. Gray suggests that:

"To this revision may be attributed the title, for an Ephraimite would scarcely date his book by reference to a series of Jewish kings. ... Elsewhere Jewish editors may have substituted Judah where Israel

1 Gray, CIOT, pp. 206-207.

stood in the original text, with a view to adapting an ancient Ephraimite prophecy to later Jewish needs: the play on names in 12:3 which may be roughly represented by rendering 'in the womb he Jacobed his brother, and in his manhood Israeled with God,' suggests that Israel and Jacob were the names originally employed in 12:3, not as now Judah and Jacob." (1)

The following verses may have been revised or added to: 1:7; 1:10; 2:1; 3:5; 4:15a; 5:5; 5:10; 12, 13, 14; 6:4; 6:11; 8:14; 10:11; 11:12b; 12:2; 14.

It is not safe to assume too much because some of these passages actually reveal Hosea's style. Of the passages enumerated 1:7 and 1:10 - 2:1 are likely to be revisions.

It is quite impossible even to attempt to summarize chapters 4 to 14, and McFadyen attributes this to the hopeless corruption of the text, as well as to the brevity and disjointed nature of the individual sections. He realizes also that it may be due in a large measure "to the hazards to which the book was exposed on being transferred to Judah after the fall of Samaria, or to the fragmentary reports of the prophet's addresses." It is McFadyen's supposition that the book expresses something of the abrupt fashion of Hosea's speeches.

G. A. Smith discusses the second section of Hosea

1 Gray, CIOT, pp. 206-207.

which he says contains a stream of addresses and reflections, appeals, upbraidings, and sarcasms, all of which have little logical connection and almost no pauses or periods. He refers to Grätz (Geschichte, pp. 93ff. to 14ff. , 439f.) who has distinguished two Hoseas, separated by a period of fifty years. In answer to Grätz, Smith says:

"But if the first section refers to the end of Jeroboam II, who died about 743, then the next few years, with their revolutionary changes in Israel, are sufficient to account for the altered outlook of the second section; while the altered style is fully explained by differences of occasion and motive There breezes throughout the same urgent and jealous temper which renders Hosea's personality so distinctive among the prophets." (1)

During the last few years a greater amount of critical study has increased the number of questions as to the authorship of certain Hosean passages. H. Wheeler Robinson lists the alleged secondary elements, apart from words and sentences of minor importance, as follows:

1. References to Judah.
2. Passages picturing the glories of the future.
3. Phrases and sentences of a technical, archaeological or historical character, inserted by way or expansion or explanation.
4. Miscellaneous glosses and interpolations for which no special motive may be

1 Smith, The Twelve Prophets, Two volumes (Hereafter cited TP), Vol. 1, p. 211.

discovered. (1)

Although there are interpolations in the book of Hosea, most of these are easily detected, and after all of minor importance. There has been much needless controversy concerning the subject. An interpolator cannot conceal the fact that he has revised a certain section, for he leaves his imprint throughout the text. It does not seem likely that an interpolator would surpass the original writer, that Hosea's actual writings would be inferior to those who revised his own testimonies. Yet this idea is widespread among critics. "It is indeed a strange conclusion of criticism which places the interpolator in a higher category than the author. There is no stimulus equal to² actuality."

1 Robinson, in Abingdon Bible Commentary (ABC) "Hosea," p. 761.
 2 Scott, The Message of Hosea, (MH) p. 8.

Chapter II

BIOGRAPHY OF THE PROPHET

* * *
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Hosea (name means God's Help) is described as the son of Beerī, who is otherwise unknown. In 7:5 and 10:3b it is inferred that he was a citizen of the northern kingdom. He is very familiar with the regions of the north, so much so that he speaks freely of the existing evils in religion, morals, and politics, and shows such a tender interest in the welfare of the people that we conclude that the land which he calls Ephraim could be none other than his own.

Sellin tells us that his acquaintance with the special sins of the priests (cf. ch. 4) hardly warrants the conclusion that Hosea belonged to priestly circles; but that according to 9:8 ff. he certainly belonged to the fellowship of the Nebiim.¹

S. L. Brown says that we can go farther and say definitely with Hölcher, that Hosea's home was in that strip of country, mountainous, yet fertile, between Bethel and Jerusalem, and overlooking the Jordan valley, which belonged to the tribe of Benjamin.

"This would explain his interest in the hill towns of Benjamin (Gibeah, Ramah, and Bethel)

1 Sellin, Introduction to the Old Testament, (IOT) pp. 157-158.

in 5:8, his allusions to Mizpah (5:1) and Adam (6:7; cf. Jos. 3:16) on this side, and to Gilgal (9:15, 12:11) and Shittim (5:2) on the other side, of the Jordan, and his acquaintance with the traditions of his immediate neighborhood, that is, his connection of Bethel with the story of Jacob (12:3ff.), his double reference to the hideous deed at Gibeah (9:9; 10:9), his mention to Baal-Peor near Shittim as the place where the Israelites made their first contact with the religion of Caanan (9:10), and his naming of Admah and Zeboim as cities that shared the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah (11:8)." (1)

Brown further suggests that the only place names outside of this district which are mentioned are those of well known cities, such as Jezreel (1:4), Tabor (5:1) Gillead (6:8; 12:11), Shechem (6:9) and Samaria (7:1; 8:5f; 10:5, 7; 13:16). This hypothesis, he claims would also explain the familiarity of Jeremiah of Anathoth with Hosea's teaching. He concludes that if the prophet's home were in the borderland between the northern and southern kingdoms, this fact would account for some of the references to Judah which critics cannot accept as Hoseanic; and that the similarity between Diblaim (1:3) and Diblathaim (Nu. 33:46; Jer. 28:22) suggests the possibility that Hosea's first home may have been, like Elijah's, in the country east of the Jordan.²

There can be little doubt that Hosea exercised his

1 Brown, HOS, 12.

2 Ibid.

ministry in the kingdom of the ten tribes; for his references to places and events in that kingdom are so numerous and detailed that we are led to believe that he was not only a prophet of that part of that country, but also a native of that section. Even Lebanon (14:5-8) is discussed in such detail as to show Hosea's familiarity with the land of the distant north.

Hölscher intimates that Hosea was a peasant, living on the land.¹ This might have been the case, for it is true that a great share of Hosea's teachings are illustrated by agricultural references. In 10:11ff. we have a good example of his knowledge of farming:

"And Ephraim is as a heifer that is taught,
and loveth to tread out the corn;
But I passed over upon her fair neck:
I will make Ephraim to ride;
Judah shall plow,
And Jacob shall break his clods.
Sow to yourselves in righteousness,
Break up your fallow ground;
For it is time to seek the Lord,
Till he come and rain righteousness upon you.
Ye have plowed wickedness,
Ye have reaped iniquity;
Ye have eaten the fruit of lies..."

Cheyne, in explaining this passage, says that the work of treading out the corn was pleasant and easy; the heifer could eat freely as it walked without a muzzle, round and round the threshing floor (Deut: 32:15). But this

1 Cheyne, The Book of Hosea, (HOS) pp. 105, 106.

heifer, that is Israel, has abused the kindness of its Lord (cf. Deut. 32:15), and henceforth shall be put to the heavy labor of the field. Judah, then, is also a stubborn heifer and cannot be exempted from her sister's punishment. As for the breaking up of the fallow ground, Cheyne reminds us that husbandmen in the East are indolent, and sometimes 'sow among thorns' (Jer. 4:3). The Israelites are warned against committing this fault in their spiritual husbandry.¹

In 9:10 Hosea describes the delight with which a traveler would unexpectedly find grapes in the desert and likewise the delight with which Jehovah regarded the children of Israel at the beginning of their national existence.

"I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness;
I saw your fathers as the first ripe in the fig tree at her first time."

The emotional nature of Hosea is revealed in many sections. In fact we can detect such excitement in certain passages that it is sometimes difficult to understand the meaning:

"His grief often choked his utterance; we can almost catch the sound of the sob in his voice. Such emotion made shipwreck of many of his sentences, and occasioned some of the obscurities of style which are a hindrance to the modern reader

1 Cheyne, HOS, pp. 105, 106.

1
of his prophecy."

On the other hand, the unusual metaphors contained in the book have such reality that one can almost visualize what the prophet is saying. For example 12:17- "he is a merchant, the balances of deceit are in his hand" and 7:8 "Ephraim is a cake not turned," are instances of a remarkably shrewd and poetic mind, capable of expressing itself in parables, a method difficult to those of low intellect.

Cornill realizes that there is a deficit of facts as to whether or not Hosea survived the overthrow of Israel. He tells us that:

"His grave, still regarded as a sanctuary, is shown in Eastern Jordan on the top of Mount Hosea, Dschebel Oscha, about three miles north of es-salt, from where we can obtain one of the most beautiful views of Palestine." (2)

Of Hosea's personal history we are told either absolutely nothing or else a great deal, according to the interpretation which we give to chapters one to three. Since the next section deals with the marriage of Hosea, this portion of Hosea's life will be discussed in greater detail in that section.

1 Thorn, The Prophets of Israel and their Messages for Today, (PIMT) p. 46.

2 Cornill, Prophets of Israel, (POI) p. 54f.

Chapter III

THE MARRIAGE OF HOSEA

* * *
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It is hardly to be supposed that Hosea, himself, produced his writings as we now have them, for during the process of years there would necessarily be some changes, due to editing and reproducing. Whether or not the prophet dictated, or even wrote the book himself, we cannot say, but it bears the stamp of a single author's mind. In spite of a few interpolations, the theme of the prophet is uppermost, and the original author shows his genius even through the writings of others.

Opinions have been divided as to whether chapters one, two, and three are records of Hosea's own experiences, or whether they are presented in the form of an allegory to illustrate his teachings.

Thus, the marriage of Hosea is questioned as to its reality. Among the most discussed interpretations of the marriage are the following three: (1) that the marriage was merely a vision; (2) that the account is an allegory; (3) that the experience was real.

A. The Visionary Interpretation:

That the marriage was merely a vision, or a dream, which the prophet used as the basis for his narrative is a

theory presented by Hengstenberg in the Bible Commentary of Kiel in 1880. This idea is considered by some to be a contribution in this field of study. However, it is safe to say that the supposition is not grounded on sufficient facts to give it authority. The story of Hosea's marital troubles is too complicated to be a vision. Then too, it reveals the personal feelings of the prophet, whose expressions are vivid and intensely real.

Dr. Horsley has little doubt that the narrative is a real occurrence; nevertheless, he maintains, that such a question is of little importance to the interpretation of the prophecy, since the story is equally emblematical, be it real or visionary only.

It should be kept in mind that if this experience be visionary, then Hosea surely must have been an ecstatic. We have no reason to assume that Hosea was an ecstatic, although he must have "beheld," as did other prophets of his time. The psychological impressions which he must have received would naturally be in keeping with his age. ✓

The prophets often received inspiration from visions, but to carry out some of the directions thus received would have been impossible in real life. For example, in Jeremiah 25:15-17, the prophet took the wine cup of Jehovah's fury "and made all the nations to drink."¹

1 Jeremiah 25:17.

Likewise, when Ezekiel was commanded to eat the roll, recording lamentations, woe, and mourning, he said, "Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness."¹ Just how shall we interpret such statements? S. L. Brown maintains that it is arbitrary to assume that because a call to prophecy may have come in a vision, it must always come in that way. "Nor is it reasonable to dismiss in this way, every story which we find difficult to believe."² Huxtable says that the minds of prophets were so familiar, when under the prophetic afflatus, with the visionary or imaginary, that men would spontaneously take what was narrated as a form in which the prophecy was clothed for the communication.³ In other words it was common for the prophets to say, "I beheld," or "I heard," as a means of expression, and perhaps as a way of developing interest in an audience.

B. The Allegorical Interpretation:

A common interpretation of the marriage of Hosea is that the account is an allegory, or a parable, intended to teach a lesson, and not to record the actual experience of the prophet.

Cheyne believes that chapter two is allegorical

1 Ezekiel, 3:3.

2 Brown, HOS, p. 33.

3 Huxtable, "Hosea" in Bible Commentary, (BC)p. 418.

and sets forth in figurative language the ideas which Hosea had obtained through his providential discipline. Whether or not the contents of chapter two reveal the thoughts of Hosea, previous to the experience related in chapter three, Cheyne does not specify, -- rather he remains uncertain, and suggests that the chapter may equally well describe his later reflections.¹

Lange definitely states that the transaction has a symbolical significance, but that the question remains as to the intention of the symbolism; that is, he wonders if this record is not an actual experience told as a symbol of a higher truth. He notes that the literal interpretation has been rejected by Chaldee Paraphrase and the Jewish commentators. He asserts that the fact that the name and origin of the woman are given proves nothing, since it would be perfectly simple to invent names for an allegory. Likewise, Lange points out that the woman in chapter three cannot be identified with the woman in chapter one, and that if the marriage of chapter one was not an actual experience, it is still more evident that the marriage is not real in chapter three. Thus, he concludes that the woman in chapter one is an invented character, and that if the author is referring to the same person in chapter three, she cannot be a real individual. A significant paragraph in Lange's discus-

¹ Cheyne, The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges, "Hosea." p. 19.

sion includes the idea that it is agreeable to the parabolic form to represent the prophet as following God's¹ command, purely from an external purpose. "As soon as we come to hold the notion of an actual transaction, the moral sense revolts against it....."²

W. Emery Barnes, in A Companion to Biblical Studies, classifies chapters one and three with the exposition, chapter two as symbolical sketches of the future destiny of Israel.³

Harper summarizes the various views in defense of the visionary and allegorical idea as against a literal interpretation, as follows:

a.) that to interpret the story literally is to question the holiness of God, and to impute to Hosea, conduct not characteristic of a prophet;

b.) that the woman in chapter three, verse one, is not the same as in chapter one;

c.) that Hosea could not have used these events as a message of deep appeal, for too much time would have to have been consumed during the process of each event;

d.) that it was customary for prophets to say that they had been "commanded," to do the impossible, as

1 Lange, J. P., and Philip Schaff, A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, (CHS) pp. 13-19.
 2 Ibid., p. 18.
 3 Barnes, A Companion to Biblical Studies, (CBS) p. 143.

in the case of Ezekiel 4:2ff.;

e.) that the whole story seems to indicate the importance of symbolical names;

f.) that it would have been psychologically impossible for a man of Hosea's character and intelligence to have received such an order from Jehovah,

g.) that the interpretation which follows is but¹ a natural explanation of a symbolic story.

The Jewish interpreters usually called the first three chapters allegorical, and Jerome of the early Christian Church, read into 14:9, an instruction to interpret the story of Hosea as a parable. "Who is wise, that he may understand' these things? Prudent that he may know them?" Calvin, as well as Jerome, considered it irreligious to believe that God would actually command a prophet to wed a woman of impurity.

Such authors as Hengstenberg, Hävernicks, Aben Ezra, Dav. Kimchi, Maimonides, Luther, Pockocke, Gill, Keil, Eichhorn, Rosenmüller, Hitzig, Reuss, and Wünsche all insist upon an allegorical view. It is Reuss who claims that a literal interpretation is impossible and that a prophet who calls his children, "Children of whoredom," shows clearly² that he is using the figurative form. Reuss maintains that

¹ Harper, Critical and Exegetical Commentary, p. 208.

² International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (ISBE) p. 1425.

Hosea is the "representative" of Jehovah; that Israel is Jehovah's wife, and also Jehovah's betrayer, when she chooses to worship foreign Baals; that the three children represent the people of Israel, who have sinned against Jehovah by wicked practices and idolatries. Continuing with the parabolic conception, Reuss says that "God does not give His people up," although they are punished for wickedness." It is a prophecy of the time when Jehovah will leave the people to their fate, till the day of reconciliation comes.¹

Certain commentators have regarded the three children as descriptions of definite portions of the history of Israel, Gomer herself representing the mother Israel. The name given to the eldest son was Jezreel, meaning "Seed of God." Dr. Horsley says that all the Jewish people who were not Jezreel, though they were of Israel, are classed as two other children; one is a daughter, Lo- ruhamah (unpitied, unloved), whose sex is a symbol of weakness, and therefore signifies the people of the ten tribes during the unstable period of the falling kingdom; the last child,² (Lo- ammi - God's Love), typifies the people of the kingdom of Judah. That Judah, in spite of her waywardness, still occupies a distinctive place in the eyes of Jehovah would seem to indi-

1 ISBE, p. 1425.

2 Newcome, The Twelve Minor Prophets, pp. 63-65.
(Hereafter cited, IVMP)

cate the kindness of the creator, who promises mercy and restoration to his people.

Referring again to the Jezr["]ael, we recognize the name of the city in which was a splendid vineyard possessed by Naboth and coveted by King Ahab. We remember that Ahab's wife, Jezebel, caused Naboth to be killed, and thus obtained the desirable vineyard for her husband. (I Kgs.:21; murdered; II Kgs.:9:21, 25, 26; avenged). Dr. Horsley says that if the word Jezr["]ael is to be understood in the book of Hosea as a city, then the threat of avenging the house of Jehu, the blood of Jezr["]ael, means that the descendants of Jehu are to pay the penalty for blood shed by Jehu. It is the blood of Jezr["]ael, he believes, which was to come upon the house of Jehu; and this blood was to be that of God's servants, who¹ in persecution would give their lives on altars.

E. Huxtable, in his critical introduction to the book of Hosea, remarks that it is altogether likely that these first three chapters are imaginary occurrences, for the marriage with one unchaste would seem morally incongruous, when one realizes that the prophet not only tolerated an immoral life, but in the words of Huxtable "cherished" such an existence. Indeed, says Huxtable, such an example, which Hosea himself continued to flaunt before the people, would

1 Newcome, IVMP, pp. 65

soon defeat any denunciations of evil which he might choose to present. But worse than that, ... "sanctioned as it must have been by Divine authority, would have served greatly to inflame the moral contamination of the time."¹

Many authors, in arguing from the allegorical viewpoint, maintain that there are practically no indications of the narrative being a record of actual fact, since in every instance the reference is to a lesson to be drawn from the story. Another argument for the allegorical interpretation is the suggestion that nothing is gained by calling the experience historical, since the story is told just as clearly and vividly as need be.

Just as there are those who feel certain that the marriage of Hosea was not an actual experience, but only an imaginary illustration, used by the author, as a symbol of a wayward nation still in the hands of a merciful God, so there are those equally convinced that the story is real history, and so too, they present their arguments.

C. The Literal Interpretation:

It is the third view, the literal interpretation, that the writer favors. Indeed, if numbers are significant, it is well to say that the majority of present day critics choose the literal interpretation. Some Jewish commentators

¹ Huxtable, "Hosea" in The Bible Commentary, Vol. VI, p. 418. (Hereafter, BC)

have considered the experience real; Cyril and Theodoret, several of the fathers, Cornelius a Lapide, Grotius, Delitzsch, Kurtz, Hoffmann, Henderson, Pusey, Wellhausen, Cheyne, Robertson Smith, and G. A. Smith are among those who have indicated that the experience of Hosea was none other than real.

In the literal view it is assumed that the woman of chapter one is the same as the woman of chapter three. We are told that Hosea married Gomer, and that three children were born to them. Some say that Hosea knew that Gomer was unchaste before he married her, and that he saw an opportunity to bring her back to Jehovah. Others say that she was not unfaithful until after marriage, at which time she turned to Baal worship, and became a victim of her own debauchery, until Hosea pitying Gomer in her misery, purchased her again, perhaps to be restored as his wife, when she had gone through the process of cleansing.

Although we can offer but possible suggestions concerning the character of Gomer, it is reasonable to believe that she might have been a member of one of the Asiatic Cults which sponsored sacred prostitution. This type of religion is not uncommon in polytheistic beliefs; it is especially evident in nature worship, as emblematical of the processes of nature. Even before the time of Hosea, the religious ritual involving the sacred marriage was a dominant

factor. In Egypt, Hathor and Horus are the two characters involved in the sacred marriage,¹ supposed to be a sacrament to bring fertility to the crops. In Babylonia, the Tammuz-Ishtar sacred marriage was a part of the magical rite performed for fertility purposes during the annual festival.² In the Canaanitic rituals, Adonis married Aphrodite, symbolizing the fertility of nature.³ If Gomer were a victim of this sacramental fornication, then it is possible that she was regarded in high esteem, and that Hosea, believing Gomer to be a "holy woman,"⁴ considered it right to purchase her for a wife. With this idea in mind, then, it would not be difficult to understand Gomer's later tendencies. That her previous experience as a sacred prostitute should serve as a deteriorating force would seem reasonable. Nevertheless, these suggestions are only suppositions, and cannot be verified. Suffice it to say that Hosea did live during the time of the Adonis Baal Cult of Canaan, a fact which would necessarily influence the prophet's teachings.

It is interesting to note that the story is told as though it had actually happened. As one author says, "the details are related in so matter-of-fact a manner that they must be matters of fact."⁵ For example, such a remark, as

1 Hooke, *Myth and Ritual*, (MR) p. 34.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 56ff. (C. J. Gadd).

3 *Ibid.*, p. 183.

4 Robinson, *Prophecy and the Prophets*, p. 76.

5 ISBE, p. 1425.

is made in Hosea 1:8 about the weaning of the first child, Lo- ruhamah, before the conception of the next child, a son, is characteristic of an actual situation. Such details as are recounted in 3:2f., concerning the penalty of a wayward woman, are indescribably vivid, and savor of real experience. Then, too, it might be added that those who did object to the "immoral nature" of the prophet's experience, might just as well object to the story being told as an allegory to teach a lesson. In accepting the literal interpretation we are not obliged to accept the idea that Gomer was an immoral woman, previous to her marriage. If it is hard to understand why Jehovah would command a righteous man to marry a harlot, then it will be helpful to remember that the word 'ēsheth zenūnīm is class descriptive, and does not designate ishshāh zōnāh, meaning a harlot woman.

Several authors, who have maintained that Gomer was originally a sacred prostitute, have held that after marriage, when she had born her husband's son, she resumed the former habits of this heathen cult. Since we do not have very accurate data concerning the cults of the day we cannot be sure as to the status of Gomer in the ritual patterns of her day. It is, however, more probable to suppose that Hosea in looking back over his total marriage experience saw that from the first there were signs of har-

lotry in Gomer. This view is called the proleptic interpretation, and seems logical in view of the existing facts.

George Buchanan Gray regards chapter one as a definite and actual record of the prophet's experiences. He believes that Jezreel, Lo- ruhamah, and Lo- ammi are no more allegorical figures than are Isaiah's children, Shear-Yashub and Maher- shalal- hash- baz. Gray's particular stress upon the actuality of chapter one is found in his argument that the names of his wife and father-in-law, over which he would have had no control, have no allegorical meaning, in relation to his teachings. That Hosea did have control over the names of his children might indicate that¹ he used them to illustrate several points in his teaching.

Sellin remarks that it is generally understood by the majority of present-day critics that chapters one and three are actual fact, not allegory. He says that the name Gomer is not susceptible of an allegorical interpretation, and that the parallels in Isaiah 7:3 and 8:3 demand a literal interpretation.

"And the number of children (3) as well as the little taught about the birth of the third after the weaning of the second in 1:8, defy allegorical interpretation." (2)

Is it not going a bit too far to argue for the alle-

1 Gray, A Critical Introduction to the Old Testament, (CIOT) pp. 204-205.

2 Sellin, Introduction to the Old Testament, (IOT)p. 159.

gorical view by saying that the name Gomer has deep symbolical significance? True, "Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim," was according to a few Jewish Commentators, the name of a famous harlot. That "Gomer" and "Diblaim" are significant words chosen because of their meaning, suggestive of the adulterous and idolatrous character of Hosea's wife might be acceptable to some, but when an author goes so far as to say that "Diblaim" means "cakes of rich compressed figs" and therefore symbolizes idolatry as gratifying the sensual tastes of its devotees, the whole analysis becomes questionable to the writer of this thesis.

Gomer is a noun from a verb which means "to perfect or accomplish," or "come to an end," but it is unlikely that this perfecting refers to Gomer's perfecting a vicious character," with a coming to an end in ruin.¹

Whether the wife mentioned in chapter three is the same wife as that of chapter one is still a matter of controversy. However, most critics will agree that she is the same person. Sellin's own view is that originally there was one story, in which Yahweh twice commanded Hosea to take a Harlot for a wife (1:2; 3:1; 3:3-5a); but through mistakes² of a later editor two different marriages evolved.

In favor of a literal understanding of the narrative

1 Huxtable, BC, VI: p. 412-413.

2 Sellin, Introduction to the Old Testament, (IOT) p. 159.

Harper lists the following, saying that it is urged:

1.) that it does not make the story any less objectionable, as far as morals and religion are concerned, be it visual, allegorical, or actual;

2.) that the prophet does not intimate whether or not he is relating vision, parable, or fact;

3.) that there is no particular symbolism involved in the name Gomer bath Diblaim;

4.) that the second child (5:6), a girl rather than a boy, has no particular symbolical meaning;

5.) that early prophecy better supports a literal view than an imaginary one;

6.) that prophets frequently gave symbolical names to their own children; (Is. 7:3; 8:3);

7.) that Hosea's message is best explained as an¹ "outcome of the sufferings of his own heart."

But even those who agree that the marriage of Hosea and Gomer was an actual experience have their dispute concerning the character of the wife and her relation to Hosea.

a.) Some say that Gomer was a harlot, and that Hosea married her for the purpose of redeeming her. There are those who claim that Gomer had borne children previously (so Abarb; Grotius, Kurtz); and there are others who claim

1 Sellin, IOT, p. 160.

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are those who claim that Gomer had borne children previously

(see Aben; Grotius, Knier); and there are others who claim

that the children were born to Gomer and Hosea after their marriage (so Böckel and Man.¹) Still others say that the children, born after the marriage are of questionable parentage (so Jer., Theodoret, Merc., Sanctius, Burkus, Dathe, Bauer, Hoffmann²). It is maintained that Hosea married a harlot with the specific purpose of showing his people that God would be merciful to Israel, even as he, Hosea, would redeem Gomer, a sinner. Sensational as the marriage might be it would afford the prophet a chance to preach to a curious, yet startled crowd. Hosea would have listeners and could preach his message.

That God would command a prophet to reclaim a public sinner, in order to point out the sinfulness of the nation and reclaim a fallen people, would seem reasonable if we considered the fact that the husband - wife relationship, as compared to Yahweh and Israel was a dominant note in the teachings of Hosea. However, there is one particular difficulty that stands in the way; it was not the practice of Hosea or the prophets to indicate the sinfulness of Israel at "the time of her union with Yahweh."³ Rather, Israel was considered pure, at least at the beginning of her venture. Later, of course, Israel became sinful. Eiselen suggests that the symbolism is inconsistent, and that Gomer must have

1 Harper, Amos and Hosea, (AH) p. 208.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid., p. 209.

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1. Harper, Amos and Hosea, (AH) p. 208.
 2. Ibid.
 3. Ibid., p. 208.

been pure when Hosea married her, and have become corrupt¹ later.

Then too, it is well to note that in chapters one, two, and three there are no indications that Yahweh purposed that Hosea marry a harlot, and thus reclaim her. Likewise, it is not in keeping with the wisdom and magnificence of such a prophet as Hosea to hear Yahweh directing that desire to marry an unchaste woman. Such a marriage would naturally bring condemnation from his listeners, and would ruin his opportunities for teaching Israel a lesson.

b.) Since Israel did indulge in Baal worship during the time of Hosea, it has been pointed out that Gomer might have been a sacred prostitute, a character to be respected rather than detested. No doubt many homes were broken up because of this evil practice. Perhaps Hosea did have an opportunity to reach these unhappy people; but on the other hand, if Baal worship were the custom, and women were employed, with public approval, as sacred prostitutes, would it not be difficult for them to accept Hosea's message? Since Baal worship was not a sinful practice, according to their mode of living, Hosea would not be compelled to uproot their early beliefs, before he could begin his teachings.

c.) There are those who considered Gomer a concubine

1 Eiselen, The Prophetic Books of the Old Testament, Vol. II, (PBOT) p. 374.

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of Hosea's, not a wife (so Thomas Aquinas, Schmidt).

Harper claims that there is not much foundation for such a belief, and notes that this theory is one of the least¹ accepted of all.

d.) Some argue that Hosea used the narrative of an unhappy home life as an allegory, and that his wife was in reality a pure woman, and the mother of Hosea's children. Ewald thought this theory perfectly possible for he believed that if Hosea's audience realized the parabolic purpose of the prophet, they would not question or ridicule his ideas.² Sympathetic as his listeners might be, it is not probable that a man so deeply in love with his wife would use her, who was supposedly chaste, as the object of his story, - that is, an immoral woman. Nor would he be likely to use the three children born to him after marriage, as further illustrations of a life of debauchery. Generally speaking, a man, loyal to his home, would not care to publish such a tale about his family, lest there be a misunderstanding concerning the purpose of his story. There is no reason to³ believe that Hosea was not relating actual history; and as a result most critics disclaim the idea of a pure wife being used as the subject of a parable of an unchaste woman.

e.) Many say that Gomer's tendencies toward immor-

¹ Davidson, in Dictionary of the Bible, (DB), II: p. 421.

² Ibid.

³ Encyclopedia Britannica, XIII, p. 784.

of Hesse's, not a wife (as Thomas Aquinas, *Scholastic*).

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5.) Many say that Hesse's technique toward immor-

1 Davidson, *A History of the Bible*, (NY), 11: 2. 421.

2 Ibid.

3 *Encyclopedia Britannica*, XII, 2. 702.

¹
ality were not known to Hosea until after their marriage.

Hosea must have been attracted to Gomer, and through his own impulses he must have desired to marry her. If she were an immoral woman, or a sacred prostitute before, it does not indicate that Hosea could not love such a person. Perhaps he did wish to reclaim her, and thought himself capable because of his great love; or, perhaps he was unaware of Gomer's adulterous disposition until after the marriage. Whichever is the case, Hosea read into his marriage the will of God; he believed that God had prompted him to marry Gomer, and that his message of an unhappy home life should be given to his people.

Directly related to this theory is the question as to the length of time necessarily consumed by the events related in the narrative. According to the custom of Hebrew women, a child is not weaned for at least two years, so the weaning of the three children must have occupied from six to ten years.² When this amount of time is considered plus the time when Gomer deserted her husband, and then finally became a slave to be sold, plus the time when Hosea purchased her and took her home again, it is clear that a good share of the prophet's life must have been spent before he began his prophecy.

¹ Harper, AH, p. 209.

² Davidson, DB, II: p. 422.

Wellhausen seems to think that Gomer's unfaithfulness was apparent before the birth of the second and third children, but there is no evidence to verify this belief.¹

"It would be more natural to suppose that it was only after all the children were born that the woman's character was revealed to the prophet, either through her desertion or in some other way, and that then for the first time he could use the bitter words, 'a wife of whoredom, and children of whoredom.' Even the passage 4:14 leaves any other view improbable." (2)

The idea that Hosea was not acquainted with Gomer's adulterous tendencies until after marriage makes the acceptance of the story less objectionable in that it would be more in harmony with a prophet of God to marry a woman whom he at least considered pure.

Chapter three tells how Hosea was commanded by Jehovah to purchase his wife and take her home again, in spite of the fact that she was still an adulteress. Had Hosea been conscious of Gomer's tendencies before he married her, her dismissal as an adulteress would hardly have been warranted (unless, of course, he had hoped to reclaim her.)

Among the Semites, Yahweh was frequently spoken of as the husband and protector of Israel. Therefore, it was not necessary that Hosea have his own marital experiences before he could understand this relationship. He must have

1 Davidson, DB, p. 422. (Vol. II)

2 Ibid.

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been a prophet through his own clear insight, for he could not have used his experience so applicably, otherwise. No doubt his own experience clarified the great teachings that followed, but we cannot deny Hosea any credit for the ability which he possessed as a natural prophet.

It is with these considerations in mind that the author has chosen to interpret the marriage of Hosea. Many of the details have already been discussed; but for a clearer and more logical review of the narrative, it is well to summarize the marriage experience as related in chapters one, two, and three.

In the beginning of chapter one, we are told that the Lord instructed Hosea to take unto himself a wife of whoredoms, "for the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the Lord."¹ As has already been suggested, Gomer must have had early tendencies for adultery, hence, the description, "wife of whoredoms." T. K. Cheyne notes that the prophet is not requested to take unto himself a harlot,² but a woman inclined toward sinful living. Since Israel was considered pure in her early relationship with God, then the wife of Hosea must also have been pure, at least at the beginning of marriage, -- thus, the meaning of the parable becomes apparent. It would seem that the lang-

1 Hosea 1:2.

2 Cheyne, Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges, "Hosea" p. 42.

been a prophet through his own clear insight, for he could not have used his experience so aptly, otherwise. He doubt his own experience clarified the great passages that followed, but we cannot deny Moses any credit for the ability which he possessed as a natural prophet.

It is with these considerations in mind that the author has chosen to interpret the marriage of Moses. Many of the details have already been discussed; but for a clearer and more logical review of the narrative, it is well to summarize the marriage experience as related in chapters one, two, and three.

In the beginning of chapter one, we are told that the Lord instructed Moses to take unto himself a wife of whomsoever, "for the land hath committed great whoredoms, ¹ departing from the Lord." As has already been suggested, other men have had early tendencies for adultery, hence, the description, "wife of whomsoever." F. E. Ouseley notes that the prophet is not requested to take unto himself a ² wife, but a woman selected for his living. Since Israel was considered wife in her early relationship with God, then the wife of Moses must also have been good, at least at the beginning of marriage, -- thus, the meaning of the parable becomes apparent. It would seem that the lang-

1. Exodus 1:2.
2. Ouseley, Canaanite Bible for Schools and Colleges, "Moses" p. 48.

uage used is indicative of the fact that the prophet had already experienced his marriage before he delivered the message. The reference to "children of whoredoms" suggests that the children have been born previous to the time, he related the story. Perhaps these children were not Hosea's or perhaps only bore characteristics similar to their mother's.

In his desire to marry Gomer, Hosea sensed a divine command, and so he took Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim, as his wife. The first child, a son, was named Jezreel, in memory of Jehu's murderers in the house of Ahab. Hosea looks forward to the time when the blood of Jezreel will be avenged upon the house of Jehu. Harper claims that the child must have been born in sin, although it was recognized for the mother's sake.¹ S. L. Brown says that most moderns agree that Gomer remained faithful until after the birth of her first, or second child. He goes so far as to say that he believes that Hosea did not discover his wife's guilt until after the birth of the third child, for the prophet was not liable to have kept his wife in the house for years, believing her to be an adulteress.²

The second child was a daughter, Lo-ruhamah, meaning "no love," or "uncompassionated." As in the case of the first

1 Harper, AH, p. 211.

2 Brown, BH, p. 6.

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"no love," or "uncompassionated." As in the case of the first

1 Harper, M. p. 211.
2 Brown, S. I. p. 6.

child the name would seem to suggest the prophet's intention to forecast disaster for Israel's waywardness. Harper is certain that Hosea discovered his wife's infidelity at least by the time the second child was born;¹ but it is just as likely that the reference is to the house of Israel, for whom Jehovah will have no more compassion, and not an expression of the prophet's dislike for his children of doubtful parentage.²

When Gomer had weaned Lo- ruhamah, she bore a son, Lo- ammi, meaning "not my heir," for "ye are not my people and I will not be your God,"³ saith Jehovah. T. K. Cheyne observes the climax in the names: 'Jezreel' predicts judgment, Lo- ruhamah symbolizes the withdrawal of Jehovah's love for Israel, and Lo- ammi symbolizes the actual separation of Jehovah from Israel and the treatment of Israel as a foreign people.⁴

Ezekiel 16:38-41 describes the judgment accorded to the woman who was unfaithful in marriage. It was the custom to strip her of her jewels, and to leave her naked for a crowd to stone to death, and stab with swords. And that not being enough, her house would be burned so that other women would take heed and realize the punishment of an adulteress. In Hosea 2:3, the prophet refers to this custom

1 Harper, AH, p. 212.

2 Brown, HOS, p. 6.

3 Hosea 1:9.

4 Cheyne, HOS, p. 44.

after discovering Gomer's unfaithfulness when he threatens to strip her naked. ... Whether Hosea could not carry out the remainder of the threat we cannot say, but it is to his credit as the prophet of love, that his judgment stopped short of the merciless treatment of the Hebrews, who either stoned to death or strangled, (the latter according to Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22). Punishment was due Gomer, but Hosea's method was far superior to the trend of his day. He had been deeply offended because in all his gifts and in all his love for his wife, he had received merely ingratitude. It was the Baal gods which not only received Gomer's affection, but also the gifts which Hosea had given his wife. Obviously, the punishment Hosea had in mind was to show his wife that true happiness could not be obtained in sinful living, that after all, he, her husband was her only real lover. In spite of her waywardness, the prophet still loved Gomer, and hoped that after a period of repentance she could be restored to him. We do not know whether the prophet dismissed his wife from the home, or whether she chose to leave of her own accord. Perhaps she became a slave - concubine, or perhaps she returned to the temple as a prostitute. All we know is that finally, when Hosea, prompted by his great love for her, decided to take her back, she had drifted into slavery. It must have been a tragic experience for him to see his wife whom he still

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loved, about to be sold for the price of a common slave. It was in the slave market that he found her, and gladly purchased her for fifteen pieces of silver, an homer and a lethekeh of barley. She could not be reestablished in his household for a time at least. She might have been employed as a common servant fulfilling her duties in that respect; we are led to believe that her former privileges as a wife were excluded from her. It is possible that she remained in seclusion, that she might better summon her self-respect, and understand her own behavior before returning to her husband. Undoubtedly she passed through some period of purification, but since the story remains unfinished, we do not know how long this period lasted. We trust, however, that the wife finally came to the "restored" relation, which Hosea had hoped for.

From the marriage experience itself, we would judge Hosea far ahead of his time. Indeed, he must have caught a glimpse into the future, for he recognized, as did Christ many years later, that when the eternal truth of love shall have become the master of men, then new powers, before unimaginable, will be introduced to the world. With such a generous, merciful nature as Hosea possessed, it is clear that the tragedy of his home life only served to sharpen his understanding of the love of God for his people. It would be too much to say that had it not been for this unhappy

experience, Hosea would not have realized his mission to the Israelites. He was a great prophet who sensed the spiritual relationship of God and man. This realization must have been dominant, even before his wife's evil practices became known to him. It became evident that his understanding of God as a merciful father of love only made it easier for the prophet to stand the test which came to him in the form of his wife's betrayal. He had the opportunity to apply this knowledge! He saw the effulgent hand of God working within the lives of men, even though they be sinful.

"There is," says George Adams Smith, "no truth uttered by later prophets about the divine grace which we do not find in germ in him ... He is the first prophet of grace, Israel's first evangelist."¹

That his message might have been limited had it not been for the domestic tragedy is a practical presupposition to be made when one reads the detailed comparison between Jehovah and Israel, and Hosea and Gomer. As a prophet he was inspired by Jehovah. As a teacher he revealed his own experience as related to God's purpose and plan. It is significant that his love was great enough to be extended to a nation of wayward people. Jehovah loved Israel, and because Hosea grasped the wonder of Jehovah's love, he longed to

¹ Smith, TP, Vol. I, p. 230.

give his message to the people. He did not stop with his own immediate family! He was a true prophet of God! There is beauty in his poetic pathos; there is strength in his yearning appeals. Some of his poems are joyful, some inspire terror, while others are tender and thoughtful. His passages of condemnation are necessary to show the prophet's conception of Jehovah's firmness, but these passages are of less importance than those which deal with the grace of God, and his love for mankind. It was the note of love which brought something new to yearning hearts, to bitter souls, and to unawakened minds. Jehovah, the God of love, the greatest of all forces, was about to take Israel in his arms, to embrace her and to say, "I am your new protector. ... I only ask that you repent of your evil living."

From chapter four through fourteen, we find the full development of the message of his personal life, as related to Israel and God. He went about his work, not without persecution. At times some thought him mad, but he answered them with:

"Verily I am mad, but on account of the multitude of thine iniquity and the multitude of the persecution." (1)

Throughout the first three chapters there is an in-

1 Hosea 9:7.

termingling of actual fact and prophetic allegory. As the author related the story of his own domestic sorrow he sensed the distress of Jehovah in losing his people; as he pointed out the way for Gomer to find happiness in repentance, he aimed to bring a wayward nation to right living.

It was not uncommon among the idolatrous Israelites to speak of the idea of a marriage between a god and individual worshippers. This form of worship must have been the subject of a portion of Hosea's condemnation, for the prophet speaks of Baalim, whom the ignorant people believed to be the same god as Yahweh. The type of husband that Hosea reveals has an altogether new meaning, however. Of a highly emotional disposition, Hosea battled with his own pride and felt the outrage of his honor. Just as human as any other husband, yet knowing himself better than do most men, he placed his problem before Jehovah, and in so doing gained renewed strength and wisdom to solve his difficulties. The type of husband he revealed showed the unselfish, loving character of a man crushed in the anguish of the shame brought upon his household, yet supreme in the final victory of divine love. If even in such an ordeal, Hosea could describe the divine purpose, he had not lost but had gained from the experience. And so he gave to Israel a new type of Yahweh, a gentle, understanding, loving God who asked for the penitent return of his sinful people. Such a message

must have taken the world by storm. It is little wonder if the people were reluctant to accept this radically different teacher's viewpoint. The prophet Hosea is to be praised not only for his own beautiful character, but for the manner in which he presented his message to the people. He used the simplest and best comparisons that he knew of to illustrate his teachings. He was a true teacher as well as prophet. Professor Cornill reminds us that these thoughts in which humanity has been educated and consoled for about three thousand years were first spoken by Hosea, and that he is to be reckoned among the greatest religious geniuses of all times:

"It is not too much to say that the entire faith and theology of later Israel grew out of Hosea, that all its characteristic views and ideas are to be first found in his book."

(1)

1 Cornill, The Prophets of Israel, (POI), pp. 50, 53.

Chapter IV

THE MAJOR TEACHINGS OF THE BOOK OF HOSEA

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The prophecy of Hosea may be divided into two sections: the first, including chapters one through three, deals with the marriage experience; and the second, including chapters four through fourteen, deals with the denunciation of Israel's sins, the inevitable punishment for a wayward nation, and finally hopes for a brighter future, when a penitent people shall have been restored to the proper relationship with Jehovah.

The major problems of the prophet may be classified under such broad headings as: A. religious; B. political; and C. social, each of which will be discussed in relation to the teachings.

A. Religious Teachings:

1. The religious condemnation of Hosea centered about the priesthood. The priests had failed in their duty to Israel by a fundamental failure to teach right ideas concerning God; and even more significant, they had allowed Israel to play the harlot and submit herself to the false worship of the Baals.

Hosea begins his message in chapter four with an appeal

to the Israelites to listen to the word of Jehovah. Yahweh, Hosea says, is in controversy with the inhabitants of the land¹ because there is no knowledge of God, and with no knowledge of God, there could be no love. Harper indicates that Hosea's ideal includes not only love of man for God, nor love of God for man, but also love for fellow- men. But the priests, not the people, receive the brunt of the reprimand. "For my people are as they that strive with the priests." It is no fault of the people that they have such evil examples set before them. The prostitutes, who are a part of the sacrificial ceremony of the high places, do not understand that they are sinning against Yahweh for the priests themselves encourage such behavior. The priests "feed on the sin" of the people, for as the prostitutes accept incomes, so they too share in the profits of the sacrifices. Hosea condemns the high places as sources of lustful living, where whoredom and wine take away the understanding. We find direct evidence concerning the worship of heathen deities in the high places which were no more than Canaanitic sanctuaries, utilized for Yahweh worship. The sanctuaries were dens of thieves, while the priests were the actual leaders in the crime.

"The physical and sensual character of the cul-

1 Harper, AH, p. 250.

2 Hosea 4:14.

3 Hosea 4:8.

4 Hosea 4:11.

5 Hosea 4:6; 6:9.

tus taken over from the Canaanitish worship of the Baalim, was wholly foreign and repugnant to Hosea's conception of the spiritual relation of Yahweh to his people. His opposition to the calf-worship was in a large part due to its carnal tendencies." (1)

Such living was out of harmony with Hosea's conception of righteousness, and he spoke scathingly of the heathen practices. (Amos had not seen the direct opposition which became apparent to Hosea.) With such a superficial attitude as the priests maintained toward Yahweh, it is not difficult to understand the decay of religion. According to Hosea, Jehovah will bring destruction upon the priests who are too concerned with material gains. They shall eat, and still be hungry, because of their greediness; they shall no longer find pleasure in immorality. But the speech of the condemnation comes with these words: "My people ask counsel at their stock" (wood). The priests have introduced Baal worship into the worship of Yahweh, and now the people turn to "wood" for advice, rather than the priests themselves.

2. Hosea grasped the significance of true worship.

He knew that men could enter into communion with God's spirit, and could so realize the nature of Jehovah that their own lives would be patterned according to God's design. Hosea

1 Harper, AH, p. cli.

2 Hosea 4:9.

3 Hosea 4:10.

4 Ibid.

5 Hosea 4:12.

himself had recognized the meaning of true worship; he was one of the first to grasp its significance and at the same time to make this known to his people.

As Harrell points out, innumerable crimes have always been committed in the name of religion. "When any evil - whether sensuousness or covetousness or pride - receives the sanction of religion, its power to corrupt individuals and society is multiplied." It was by this means that the religion of Israel became paganized.¹ Outwardly the Israelites were paying tribute to Jehovah, but the rituals and traditional sacrifices were only shams, covering up the real nature of the people. Hosea's interpretation of Yahweh was that of a spiritual God, interested in the righteousness of a nation. Hastings summarizes this thought by saying that Hosea's God was one who stood supremely for moral things, not for physical things; He was a God who intended that this world should be only a means to an end, - a platform on which a human drama was to be enacted, "a scaffolding within which a temple of eternal human character of goodness was to be built up, a kingdom of heaven on earth."² Ceremonials and sacrifices were of no avail, without a right spirit, and a clean heart, according to Hosea.

1 Harrell, The Prophets of Israel, (PI) p. 68.

2 Hastings, The Greater Men and Women of the Bible, edited by James Hastings; N. Y., Scribner's, 1915; p. 371.

3. Concerning Hosea's teaching as to the nature and character of Yahweh, Eiselen maintains that although the prophet was not a theoretical monotheist, at least he can be called a practical monotheist.¹ Eiselen also believes that the manner in which Hosea refers to Yahweh as using other nations in a part of the great plan (8:1ff.; 13;9:3), would seem to indicate that the prophet considered Yahweh a power over other nations as well as Israel.² We are led to believe that Hosea's God was one of supreme power. Hosea emphasizes divine love as the most important characteristic of Yahweh. God loves as a father loves his children, or as a husband loves his wife. Significant is the passage which reads: "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt."³ The next verses are equally important, for they further characterize Yahweh as a God whose love has been unrequited. The more the prophets called the people to worship Jehovah, the more they turned from him to lay their sacrifices before the Baalim. They burned incense to graven images, incapable of any power. "I drew them with the cords of a man, with bands of love; and I was to them as they that lift up the yoke on their jaws; and I laid food before them."⁴

1 Eiselen, PBOT, p. 377.

2 Ibid.

3 Hosea 11:1.

4 Hosea 11:4.

Although Hosea represents Yahweh as a God of love, he also shows that God punishes those who sin. It is to the righteous that God gives his blessing. Eiselen points out that the contemporaries of Hosea and Amos seemed to think that since Yahweh had chosen them, he would continue to accept his people no matter what their conduct might be. Such an attitude would be difficult to counteract. Typical of Yahweh's threats is the following verse: "woe unto them! for they have wandered from me; destruction unto them! for they have trespassed against me: though I would redeem them, yet they have spoken lies against me."²

Another aspect of Jehovah's nature is revealed by the prophet. Yahweh has allied himself with Israel, and only by the utmost disloyalty can this union be absolved. Yahweh has made a covenant with Israel, and this covenant is based on love and righteous living.

A most significant characteristic of Jehovah is revealed in His purpose for punishment of a wicked nation. Israel is too sinful to be spared much longer; the penalty must be paid. But the doom that awaits Israel is not intended to destroy, rather it is a means of purification before the restoration. "God is a kind father who punishes his child with a bleeding heart, for its own good, so that he may

¹ Hosea 7:13.

² Cornill, POI, p. 51.

afterward enfold it all the more warmly in his arms."¹

We do not know what Hosea's whole attitude was toward non-Israelitish nations, but we do know that he considered Israel a chosen people. It might be added that it is somewhat to his discredit that in his outline of a glorious future he fails to mention any such glorious future for any nation other than Israel.

Whether Hosea is referring to the Messianic element in chapter three, we cannot say. However, such a statement as: "Afterward shall the children of Israel return and seek Jehovah their God, and David their king, and shall come with fear unto Jehovah and to his goodness in the latter days,"² would seem to indicate, as Eiselen suggests, that Hosea may have been the first prophet to speak of the ideal king, who figures so largely in the hopes of future generations.³ Eiselen believes it unfortunate that both chapter three, verse five, and chapter one, verse eleven are still open to argument as to their genuineness. He does not consider the arguments against the former to be conclusive.⁴

B. Political Teachings:

1. Hosea unflinchingly condemned the government of his people. We read about the scourging of the kings for their

1 Cornill, POI, p. 51.

2 Hosea 3:5.

3 Eiselen, PBOT, p. 380.

4 Ibid.

weaknesses and evil tendencies. Even during the time of the great ruler Jeroboam II, Hosea can see only an unrighteous leader, selfish in his military escapades and murders. With scheming rulers and godless leaders to assist the rulers, Hosea sees doom for Israel.

Mizpah and Tabor mentioned in chapter five, verse five, as snares to tempt the people, were both sanctuaries. (Mizpah is in Gilead, and Tabor is not far from Nazareth.)¹ If the political heads continue to encourage the sacred cult, then they can expect to reap disaster. Jehovah will pour out his wrath on the princes of Judah who are "like them² that remove the landmark," that is, like the princes who steal land to satisfy their own selfish whims.

Such a condition as chapter seven verse three, reveals the evil practices of the kings themselves, who rejoice when they see the wickedness of the people, or when they listen to the lies of the princes. Apparently, as Hosea notes, it³ was the vogue to be evil. The leaders are debauched, and as a result they entrap the people by their evil examples. The prophet describes the prevalent tendencies of the day, including bloodshed, robbery, breaking of treaties, drunkenness, and⁴ unchastity. The rulers dearly love shame. Hosea believes

1 Hosea 1:5.

2 Hosea 5:10.

3 Hosea 7:4.

4 Hosea 4:18.

weaknesses and evil tendencies. Even during the time of
the great ruler Jeroboam II, Moses can see only an unright-
eous leader, selfish in his military escapades and ambitions.
With scheming rulers and godless leaders to resist the rulers,
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Miriam and Deborah mentioned in chapter five, verse
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- 1 Moses 1:5.
 - 2 Moses 3:10.
 - 3 Moses 7:4.
 - 4 Moses 4:15.

that the people will soon be saying, "We have no king; for we fear not Jehovah; and the king, what can he do for us?"¹

For a government thoroughly saturated with immoral practices and debauched from lack of law and order, the prophet sees a just punishment, which is to come in two ways: not only will an invading army destroy the land, even as a lion takes his prey, but also the internal corruption of Israel will work its own havoc, just as the moth destroys slowly but surely.²

Ephraim, says Hosea, is a cake, not turned.³ George Adam Smith reminds us of the Eastern round, flat scone, which is baked by being laid on hot stones or attached to the wall of a heated oven. Smith mentions the fact that the whole art of baking consists in turning the scone over at the correct time. If this is not done properly, one side is burned and the other remains raw.⁴ "How better describe a half-fed people, a half-cultured society, a half-lived religion, a half-hearted policy than by a half-baked scone?"⁵

2. The prophet attempted to show the futility of alliances with foreign nations, rather than dependence upon Yahweh. Israel places her trust in men, and turns to Egypt and Assyria for help; alliances with God are considered un-

1 Hosea 10:3.

2 Hosea 5:1-14.

3 Hosea 7:8.

4 Smith, PI, p. 272.

5 Ibid., p. 273.

important. "And Ephraim is like a silly dove, without¹ understanding; they call unto Egypt, they go to Assyria." Ephraim not only feeds on the East wind, (the sirocco, the² deadly southeast wind, which destroys all it touches) but continually chases it. To what avail is this enrichment of other nations, unworthy of any service from Israel? Hosea senses the unreliability of alliances with nations seeking their own vain glories; Israel is being exploited, and if she does not learn her lesson soon, she will be completely destroyed by those in whom she now places her trust." the Assyrian shall be their king, because they refused to return to me. And the sword shall fall upon their cities, and shall consume their bars, and devour them, because of their own counsels."³

In chapter eleven, verse eight, we find the epigram⁴ about Ephraim: "he mixeth himself among the peoples," Little does Ephraim know that his strength is being sapped, and not increased by these foreign intrigues. Hosea's outstanding reprimand in this regard comes when he denounces⁵ Israel' for allowing herself to be "swallowed up" by other nations. Israel herself has become as other nations, even to the extent of accepting foreign gods, in the place of Yahweh, the only true God.

1 Hosea 7:11.

2 Harper, AH, p. 377.

3 Hosea 11:5, 6.

4 Hosea 8:8.

5 Israel is sometimes spoken of as masculine; again as feminine.

Hosea condemns the separation of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, saying that both are under false leadership. The prophet is little concerned with the outside world, except in his confidence that Assyria and Egypt will be used as chastizement for turning away from Yahweh. He places Yahweh as the supreme God over Israel, and over the gods of all other nations.

Throughout chapters four through fourteen, Hosea proves himself to be mainly a prophet of the decline and fall of the northern kingdom. He condemns the government as not ordained of God, but of man's military prowess. In a single decade six monarchs had succeeded Jeroboam II, some of whom were murdered by their successors. With internal disruption and national insecurity, the prophet probably knew that it was a natural consequence to turn to foreign nations for help; but he also saw the folly of foreign alliances and realized that the only solution lay in the cleansing of the politics of Israel.

Chapter seven, verse nine is a climactic rebuke: "Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not; yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not." Israel (sometimes referred to as feminine, and other times as masculine) has become old, and because of years of wickedness, he is about to be overthrown by other nations. But strangely enough, Israel does not sense

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other nations. But strangely enough, Israel does not sense

his danger, and sees no reason for making preparation against disaster. Even though he is old, and has not long to live, he forgets Yahweh, who alone can solve spiritual difficulties; instead, he calls in foreign gods, and hopes to regain his youth and vitality, and thus escape death. Like a silly dove, Israel flies first to one nation and then to another, little realizing that Assyria and Egypt are laying snares to trap their rival.¹ By the Egyptians, the Israelites were betrayed, and by the Assyrians, they were ruined.² Of a foreign god, Hosea says, "...the workman made it, therefore it is not god."³ Thus, there is no honor due an image which being man-made, is therefore, not above man himself.⁴

Because the Israelites continue their sacrifices and offerings to these foreign gods, Hosea threatens his people with famine and exile, in a land where the food is unclean, and the true Jehovah unknown.⁵ "...Ephraim shall return to Egypt and they shall eat unclean things in Assyria their sacrifices shall be unto them as the bread of mourners; all that eat thereof shall be polluted."⁶ No illustration of uncleanness could have been much stronger than the use of the bread of mourners," for accord-

1 Hosea 7:11.

2 Clark, The Holy Bible (HB), p. 640.

3 Hosea 8:6.

4 Hosea 9:2,3.

5 Hosea 9:4,5.

6 Hosea 9:3,4.

ing to the law, a dead body, and all that came in contact with the body, including the house where it lay, or the people who touched it, became polluted, and in turn, whatever they touched became unclean.¹ Nor could verse six of chapter nine be more tragic. It reads: "For, lo, they are gone because of destruction: Egypt shall gather them up, Memphis shall bury them: the pleasant places for their silver, nettles shall possess them: thorns shall be in their tabernacles."

Even in a rebuke the prophet pauses to give promise of hope and a restored future, for he says, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thine help."² MacLaren believes that these words are set in the same key as the still more wonderfully tender ones, uttered by Jesus, as He looked across the valley from Olivet to the bright city beyond, and cried, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Therefore, your house is left unto you desolate."³

In chapter fourteen, the prophet pleads with his people to cleanse their organizations of state and thus be reunited with God. Hosea speaks of the blessings to come to Israel

1 Clark, HB, p. 643.

2 Hosea 13:9.

3 MacLaren, "Hosea" in Expositions of Holy Scripture (EHS), pp. 122, 123.

when once again the nation will have accepted Yahweh as the creator, king, and saviour.

C. Social Teachings:

1. Unlike Amos, Hosea does not denounce society for allowing oppression and exploitation of the poor. However, he does mention greedy princes, who no doubt were oppressors of the poor. The prophet was so absorbed in the moral degeneracy of his time that he used his influence to abolish drunken revelries, swearing, breaking faith, killing, stealing, and adultery. If the religious leaders and the national officials encourage such lascivious activities, how could the people be expected to live in a harmonious relationship among themselves?

"Gilead is a city of them that work vanity; it is dabbled in blood. As robbers lie in wait for a man, so the company of priests murder on the road to Shechem, yea they commit villainy. In the house of Israel I have seen a horrible thing; there is whoredom of Ephraim, Israel is defiled." (1)

God is frustrated by the sinfulness of a people who have neglected their obligations. Indeed, punishment is at hand, for there seems to be no other remedy for the hopelessly corrupt social life. But if Israel will truly repent² (Yahweh will not tolerate pretense), and agree once more to

1 Hosea 6:8ff.

2 Hosea 6:4ff.

follow God's will, then the nation will experience a material and spiritual restoration.

Hosea's teachings concerning the need of social purification, thus are interwoven throughout the whole prophecy. Even in chapter three we read of judgment, reformation and finally salvation: "Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall come with fear unto the Lord and to his goodness in the latter days."¹

Again we read of the social chastening: "They shall come trembling as a dove out of the land of Assyria, and I will make them to dwell in their houses, saith the Lord."² Social cleansing will come with the renewal of the love-relationship, the result of a perfect communion between Yahweh and Israel.

2. The prophet was emphatic in his message of the need of personal purity, for he knew that the religious corruption and moral iniquities could be chastened only with individual fidelity to Yahweh. God demands moral lives, not ritualistic or sacrificial services. "I desire loving kindness and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings."³ ... Therefore, turn thou to thy God, keep kindness and justice and wait for thy God continually."⁴

1 Hosea 3:5.

2 Hosea 11:11.

3 Hosea 6:6.

4 Hosea 12:6.

3. Julius A. Bewer admires the prophet for his insight into the social life of the people; Hosea realizes that in Israel sin has become a habit, a tendency from which the nation cannot free itself except through suffering. The political background has warped the moral as well as the religious conceptions of society.¹ Internal revolts and wars necessarily result in social upheaval. To repair a nation which has been the victim of cruel and selfish leadership is no easy task. Much as Hosea detested personal wickedness, he was quick to see that the general populace was not altogether to blame. How were they to know that the practices of the sacred cults were immoral, when the princes and priests advocated their advancement? The kings, who in succession murdered in order to gain the throne, knew that the only possible means of power for them would come in alliances with Assyria and Egypt. It is not surprising, then, that during the period of national upheaval, law and order became lax and society grew morally corrupt. Hosea must have had great difficulty in unfolding his message of social righteousness to a people completely demoralized,

1 Jeroboam's son, Zechariah (as Hosea had predicted) was slain after a reign of six months, and the assassin himself, Shallum, took the throne, only to be murdered by another, Menahem, who in turn snatched the kingship. Principally because of an alliance with Assyria, Menahem retained his throne for six years, but his son and successor, Pekahiah, was murdered by Pekah, who became the ruler. And then the Assyrians captured Damascus, and it wasn't long before the whole nation collapsed.

and thirsty for more senseless and irreligious living. It is little wonder, if in the midst of all this chaos, the people scoffed at a prophet who discussed the divine love of Yahweh for Israel. Hosea knew that his people could not be reached, for history had provided too sordid a background for spiritual socialization. Only by punishment and suffering would the people understand that God demands social purification before Israel can come into the restored relationship.

4. Finally, after a period of suffering, Israel will be cleansed and will realize her iniquities, and will at last turn to Yahweh and say: "What have I to do any more with idols?" And Yahweh will answer: "I am like a green fir tree; from me is thy fruit found.¹" Hosea looked for the ideal society, when peace would reign and all battles cease." And in that day I will make a covenant for them. ... and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the land, and will make them to lie down safely.² The prophet saw a solution for man's difficulties -- love of man for man, and loyalty to God's will. But Israel never tried this policy! It is not just to say that a society bound together by true love, is not enough to endure the onslaughts of other nations --such as Assyria and Egypt, for the test has never been made!

1 Hosea 14:8.

2 Hosea 2:18.

Jesus reiterated this message, -- only far more perfectly. But no nation has ever held steadfastly to Jesus' teachings of social justice and love. It remains to be seen whether or not this supreme message of hope and love will someday have become the key-note to a harmonious social world. But the solution is only simplified when society has been taught, through experience, the worth of a reverent love for God.

Thus, briefly, the message of Hosea is inclusive of such thoughts as:

- 1.) Israel is a wicked nation, religiously, politically, and socially.
- 2.) Israel has no knowledge of Jehovah.
- 3.) Israel thinks she is repenting, but she is not. She is deceiving herself.
- 4.) Doom is imminent, for the nation is beyond repair.
- 5.) God loves Israel as a father loves his child, or a husband loves his wife. God is the great physician, the healer of all wounds, the giver of all gifts and the master of all men.
- 6.) Destruction is about to come upon Israel; there will be a period of suffering, for the purpose of cleansing.
- 7.) Following a thorough purification, Israel will once more be received into the arms of Jehovah, and will at last experience the restored relationship.

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The message may be summarized by dividing the book of

Hosea into sections:

Section I includes chapters one through three, which give the story of the tragedy of Hosea's marriage to Gomer, and (chapter two) its significance, as related to God and Israel.

Section II includes chapters three through fourteen which give significant parts of the prophet's teachings.

A. Chapters 4:1-7:7 deal with the immoral living of the people of Israel, and the evil practices carried on in the name of religion. Chapter five portrays Jehovah as a God who feels that he has been wronged. In return for Jehovah's love, the people have given contempt. They continue to follow the commands of men, not of God.¹ Chapter six describes the iniquities of Israel. The people are victims of a system of leaders and priests who themselves carry on licentious activities, and so set evil examples for the nation. The people do not know that God demands goodness, not sacrifice, and knowledge of God more than burnt-offering.

B. Chapters 7:8-10:15 deal with the political upheaval, and the inevitable doom that is bound to follow the chaos in home and foreign affairs. From 7:8 to 8:3, Israel is derided for her half-hearted policies. She is corrupt because she has turned to foreign alliances, and foreign gods,

1 Hosea 5:11.

and has neglected to worship the true god, Jehovah. The worship of foreign gods has been interwoven in Yahweh's worship, and there will soon be punishment for such waywardness.

Chapter eight reveals the revolutionary conditions at home. "They have set up kings, but not by me. . . . Of their silver and their gold have they made them idols." But¹ they sow in the wind and shall reap the whirlwind. There is punishment at hand.

C. Chapter 11:1-11 tells of Jehovah's love, a love so great that it will finally conquer all. This portion of the book contains one of the most outstanding messages. So tender, so healing, is Jehovah's love, that it will eventually win in the combat against disloyalty (to God).

D. Chapter 11:12 to 13:16 relates God's entreaty to His wayward people. If Israel continues to ignore her God, then even Jehovah's great love will not be enough to keep the people from punishment.

E. Chapter 14 suggests a solution for the difficulties of the world. With repentance for evil, comes the return to Jehovah, and love of man for man.

1 Hosea 8:4.

2 Hosea 8:7.

Chapter V

THE RELATION OF HOSEA'S MARRIAGE TO

HIS TEACHINGS

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"For I delight in love, and not in sacrifice,
and in the knowledge of God more than in burnt
offering." Hosea 6:6

The prophet's bitter experience with an unfaithful wife, revealed more clearly to him, the divine nature of Jehovah. Can we say that Hosea did not grasp the meaning of God's will toward men, until Gomer betrayed him? This is hardly possible, for by his very treatment of a wayward woman, he showed that his knowledge of God was no mechanical revelation, but a vibrant belief, which scintillated even in a period of tragedy. True, Hosea learned more about the divine love of Jehovah, when the domestic tragedy tested his sincerity. His unhappy married life prepared him for giving expression to this ideal, as a newly-applied truth. The lesson had become a part of the prophet. He was beset with the conflict of warring emotions, for the tender compassion, and love for his wife was accompanied by a loathing for her sin. Naturally enough, he realized that both emotions were valuable if discipline were to be exercised at the same time. Surely, Jehovah hated sin in Israel, and yet loved his people in spite of their evil ways. Jehovah, too, became indignant when he

saw that his people accepted his gifts and yet worshipped gods of wood and stone. And so the prophet penetrated the nature of Jehovah; he sympathized with God, who like the prophet, had been betrayed for gods of no power.

The teaching of Hosea is so closely allied to his marriage experience that practically every verse, in the book, has a connotation in this regard. Except for parts¹ of chapter two, which chapter contains the prophet's commentary concerning the theme of his marriage as related to God and Israel,² the first three chapters deal with the story of Hosea's domestic troubles. Before discussing chapters four through fourteen, which give the major teachings, it is well to note the relation of the marriage to the teachings as illustrated in chapter two by the prophet's own brief comments on the subject.

It is in chapter two that we read: "Plead with your mother, plead: for she is not my wife, neither am I her husband...."³ In this verse, it is clear that the author has a second meaning in mind. Not only has Gomer forsaken Hosea, but also Israel has forsaken her husband, Jehovah. However,

1 Hosea 2:2-23.

2 S. L. Brown notes that it is obvious to any one who has read the book, that the text has been disarranged. He believes that two sections are out of place: a) 1:10-2:1 (Hosea 2:1-3), which contains a promise of restoration, before the details of the judgment or of Jehovah's ethical demands are stated, and b) 3:1-5, which continues the story of 1:2-9. Brown, HOS, p. 1.

3 Hosea 2:2.

like Gomer, Israel is still a "mother" to her children even though she may have gone to foreign lovers. To the individual Israelites, Jehovah turns (just as Hosea turns to his children) beseeching them to plead with Israel to be a better mother. Israel, as the adulterous wife, is threatened with the punishment common for her sin. "Lest I strip her naked, and set her as in the day that she was born, and make her as a wilderness,"¹ refers first to Hosea's wife and then to Israel. Israel's early history is recalled, for the prophet mentions the time when Israel wandered in the wilderness. It was Jehovah who delivered Israel from the privations of the wilderness, and it was Jehovah who promised a land flowing with milk and honey if Israel would be faithful in her obedience to her saviour. But now Israel had broken her part of the covenant and God was about to "set her like a dry land,"² or the wilderness that she was when she was born. Just as the punishment which awaited an adulteress consisted in stripping her naked and stoning her to death, so the punishment which awaited Israel consisted in stripping her bare as a parched land, to meet her death through thirst.

"Yea, upon her children will I have no mercy; for they be children of whoredom."³ Jehovah will destroy the

1 Hosea 2:3.

2 Ibid.

3 Hosea 2:4.

land, even to the destruction of the offspring of Israel, who are all idolators, and show marks of immorality, similar to their mothers'. The allusion is to Hosea's own experience when Gomer gave birth to children whose parentage was not only questionable, but whose characteristics were no doubt influenced by an immoral mother. Surely, Jehovah is not the father of all these idolatrous children!

In verse five we read: "I will go after my lovers that give me bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and mine drink." Gomer was deceived in the belief that her paramours gave her food and drink as well as clothes and jewels. The Baal gods had been credited with bringing fertile soil and ample crops, and Jehovah was worshipped merely as a figure-head; necessary, yet capable of no power in himself.

The religious practices had become so immoral that Hosea realized that much as the people believed they were still worshipping Yahweh, there was no possible connection between the righteousness of the only true God, and the immorality of the false gods. Gomer had gone in search of lovers who could offer nothing but destruction. Little did she realize that her own husband would give her food, drink, and clothing, and all else she wanted. Jehovah, not the Baalim, was the true provider, but Israel chose the Baal gods, whose structure and composition should be enough to

indicate their lack of power.

By some means (possibly a calamity) Jehovah with thorns and a fence will hedge up the way of Israel so that she will lose the path, and not be able to find her lovers. With no self-control remaining, Israel must be barred from the Baal gods, or else she will continue to follow the well-beaten path to their contaminating sanctuaries. And the Baal gods, or lovers, will have no power to release Israel from her confinement. Israel has deceived herself! No longer will the material blessings heretofore given Israel be hers, for Jehovah, being neglected, will give no rewards; as for the Baal gods, who have never given anything except stupid looks from their wooden faces, - they will continue to look just as stupid, and Israel will think that the Baal lovers have forsaken her.¹ Not until Israel has no bread, water, wool, flax, or wine, will she seek Jehovah for help. Captivity and punishment will cause a wayward nation to see the goodness of the real God, and husband of Israel, who provided plenty of the material blessings. Like Gomer, Israel must first suffer physically for her sins, before she can sense the nature of God's material blessings; and then perhaps she will suffer mentally and realize the spiritual benefits of a righteous God. Hosea knew that material living in relation

¹ Hosea 2:6,7.

to Jehovah was still on a low level, but he knew also that suffering in this realm would result in future spiritual gains. Just as Gomer will no longer feel the lure of paramours who can give her nothing but betrayal, so too, Israel¹ will turn to something more substantial to depend upon.

Israel was not altogether guilty, for she did not know that it was God who gave her corn, wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold which were used in the Baal sacrifices. That is, the populace in general, was not to blame, for knowledge was lacking among the people, and the priests set bad examples. Gomer and Israel both had to learn from experience that the deeds they committed were not in harmony with the will of the prophet, or the will of Jehovah. Jehovah had been deeply injured for the furtherance of false gods. Like Hosea who had given gifts and love to his wife, but all to no avail, Jehovah too had given gifts and love to Israel, but these were unrequited. God's gifts to Israel and Hosea's to Gomer had been used as instruments to dishonor the givers.² All appeals have failed, and the thankless nation will be punished. When Gomer was forced to leave her home, she was compelled to live without the necessities of life, and in such a condition she must have become slovenly

1 Hosea 2:7.

2 Hosea 2:8.

and possibly sickly; to be shamed in the presence of her lovers who once had admired her for her beauty and raiment, - to be thoroughly repulsive to these lovers must have been the zenith of shame for Gomer. No doubt, she twinged under the glances of paramours, obviously contemptuous of her nakedness and immodesty, and at the same time powerless to release her from her troubles, even if they so desired. To predict disgrace for Israel, in the sight of her lovers, seems to indicate, according to S. L. Brown, that Hosea, admitted the existence of other gods; nevertheless, Brown concludes that it may have been only a poetical way of saying that Israel will be shamed in her places of worship.¹ Be that as it may, the prophet had a two-fold thought in his expression of punishment for Gomer who so closely resembled Israel. Israel will be pillaged and captured; no longer will her feast days and worship ceremonials be mirthful, for there will be no cause for rejoicing. Synonymous with this idea is Hosea's interpretation of the disaster which befell his wife when she no longer found her lovers amusing, or even helpful.² Her days of merriment were over.

Jehovah will punish Israel for the time she has wasted on the Baalim, -- "wherein she burned incense to

¹ Brown, HOS, p. 18.

² Hosea 2:11.

and possibly at last; to be shamed in the presence of her
 lovers who once had admired her for her beauty and refinement,
 - to be thoroughly repulsive to these lovers must have been
 the height of shame for Homer. No doubt, she twined under
 the kisses of her lovers, obviously contemptuous of her
 weakness and helplessness, and at the same time powerful to
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1 Brown, HOS, p. 18.
 2 Hosea 2:17.

them, and decked herself with her earrings and her jewels, and ... went after her lovers, and forgot me, saith the ¹ Lord." Hosea had watched his wife as she bejeweled herself and burned incense in honor of her lovers. As he suffered from his wife's rejections, he sensed all the more keenly God's unhappy position in relation to Israel; this vivid description of a nation whose trinkets only served as ornaments of offense against the giver of gifts, shows the prophet's deep insight into the nature of his wife as well as Israel.

Verse fourteen of chapter two reads: "Therefore, behold I will allure her and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her." As a kind husband treats an unfaithful wife whom he loves, so Jehovah will have compassion upon Israel, and deal with her gently in a consoling and encouraging manner. If Israel will repent, and try to abide by the will of God, she will be restored to a right relationship with her protector, just as Gomer, who had been purchased in the slave market, returned to her home to be purified and restored to her husband. It is possible that Hosea refers to a period of exile in foreign land, when he speaks of the wilderness where Jehovah will woo and win Israel to repentance. Israel is to be given the valley of Achor

1 Hosea 2:13.

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for a door of hope. The valley of Achor, mentioned in Isaiah 5:10 as "a place for the herds to lie down, was located north of Jericho, not far from Gilgal. Although the place had had evil associations, the prophet here is reminded of the fruitfulness of the valley, and uses the name Achor in regard to a promise of new prosperity. Once again, Israel shall sing, as in the days of her youth when she came up out of the land of Egypt. Gomer had been rescued from her misery, and we trust that after her period of repentance and purification, she was finally united with Hosea, as she had been at the beginning of the marriage.

"And it shall be at that day, saith the Lord, that thou shalt call me Ishi; and shalt call me no more Baali."² "Ishi" is to be interpreted as meaning "my man" or "my husband," and is therefore a title of love and affection when contrasted to "Baali," meaning "my master," and exciting fear or apprehension.³

That the ways of the nation, Israel, are symbolic of Gomer's tendencies, cannot be denied, since each reference is obvious enough in this relation. Jehovah says of Israel: "... I will betroth thee unto me forever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-

1 Hosea, 2:15.

2 Hosea 2:16.

3 Clarke, HB, IV: p. 269.

for a door of hope? The valley of Achor, mentioned in
 Isaiah 5:10 as "a place for the horse to lie down, and
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1 Hosea, 2:10.
 2 Hosea 2:10.
 3 Isaiah, 55, IV, p. 280.

ness, and in mercies ... I will even betroth thee unto me¹ in faithfulness; and thou shalt know the Lord. No passage could be more pointed in revealing the evident relation which Hosea saw between Israel and Gomer. As the prophet was betrothed to Gomer in righteousness, according to the laws of society, and with the affection of a lover who is likewise merciful, so God is betrothed to Israel in the same manner. In faithfulness, Israel shall know Jehovah, her husband, and she shall no more prostitute herself to idols. And then, finally Jehovah will say to them which were not his people,² "Thou art my people" and they shall say, "Thou art my God." Thus, the prophet repeats with slight variation, the words he used when telling of the births of Lo- ruhamah and Lo-ammi, who although children of a harlot-mother, will someday realize their obligations, and like Israel's children, be united in family ties of love.

From this section of the book of Hosea we discern the prophet's master-key to his message. Hosea's wife is not only a symbol; she is a specimen, to be examined by fellow Israelites guilty of the same conduct as their object of study. Gomer is a representative for Israel.

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1 Hosea 2:19, 20.

2 Hosea 2:23ff.

In order to show the relation of Hosea's message to his marriage experience, it is well to follow the classification of the teachings given in the preceding chapter, namely: religious, political, and social.

A. Religious Teachings in relation to the Marriage Experience.

1. The religious condemnation of Hosea centered about the priesthood.

The priests themselves are nothing but a troop of robbers, who lie in wait for victims, and who constantly commit lewdness. "Yet let no man strive, neither let any man reprove; for thy people are as they that strive with the ¹ priest." It is not the general populace of Israel which is to blame for the sins and irreligious conduct prevalent throughout the nation; rather, the priests themselves are at fault for they have withheld the knowledge of Jehovah. Had it not been for conduct of the religious leaders, whose obnoxious demands had influenced the prophet's wife, it is possible that Hosea's marriage would have been free from interference. Many homes must have been broken up as a result of the influence of the priests in the sacred sanctuaries, and undoubtedly the prophet knew that his message would at least touch the hearts of those who had been wounded by a loved one.

1 Hosea 5:9.

In order to show the relation of Hosea's message to his marriage experience, it is well to follow the mission of the teachings given in the preceding chapter, namely: religious, political, and social.

4. Religious Teachings in relation to the Marriage Experience

1. The religious condemnation of Hosea centered about

the priesthood.

The priests themselves are not only but a group of robbers, who lie in wait for victims, and who constantly commit lawlessness. "Yet let no man strive, neither let any man remove; for thy people are as they that strive with the priest." It is not the general populace of Israel which is to blame for the sins and lawlessness which are prevalent throughout the nation; rather, the priests themselves are at fault for they have withheld the knowledge of Jehovah. Had it not been for conduct of the religious leaders, who obviously demands had influenced the people's wife, it is possible that Hosea's marriage would have been free from lawlessness. Many houses must have been broken up as a result of the lawlessness of the priests in the sacred sanctuary, and undoubtedly the prophet knew that his message would at least touch the hearts of those who had been wounded by a loved one.

To say that the priests were heathenistic might be stressing the point a little too far, but to say that the worship encouraged by these priests bore the marks of heathenism is by no means an exaggeration. Hosea rebukes the priests for allowing the people to seek counsel from wooden images which are worshipped through acts of prostitution. These worship services were held in public places; -- but apparently the leaders conceived of the idea that comparatively secretive places were more conducive to the mystery of the cult, for it was on the tops of mountains, and under oaks, poplars,¹ and terebinths that the sacrifices were offered. Forest groves would conveniently hide the adulterers from critical eyes. Hosea protests against the immorality of the priests, who enveigle innocent people into the fold of the cult, that they, the priests might gain riches, and thus increase in personal power. That superstition could prevail upon Israel, with whom Jehovah once made a covenant was a difficult problem for Hosea. We note the prophet's condemnation of Israel: how easily influenced is Israel; and how weak in her wavering and indecision! If only some strong leaders could replace the priests and lead the nation to righteousness, so that Israel could be saved before it is too late. But there are no righteous priests, and Gomer, Hosea's own wife, was a

1 Hosea 4:13.

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no righteous priests, and worse, Hosea's own wife, was a

victim of the superstitious program outlined by the priests, as a snare of deception for innocent people. Although the priests are to blame, punishment will fall upon all of Israel, just as Gomer, intrigued by evil lovers, had to suffer the consequences.

The hypocrisy of the priests disturbed Hosea very definitely. While they were conscious of deceiving the people, yet the priests themselves practiced evil so consistently, that they were practically convinced of the value of their own sinning; that is, they not only deceived the people, but also deceived themselves at the same time. That the priests thought they were taking a short cut to prosperity and also to God cannot be denied. They served for material gain, and professed that they served God for His own sake.

Of all the forms of infidelity, the hypocrisy of the priests was the lowest, for they lied to others as well as to themselves. To Hosea, the folly of the priests is beyond hope, and deserving of severe punishment. With his own wife, a victim of this hypocrisy, the prophet could not contain his wrath, for the whole system which encouraged perjury, killing, stealing, and adultery. Israel has passed through an era of prosperity and her interest in material wealth has overshadowed any spiritual profits. Israel is selfish. She has forgotten her debt to Jehovah. Gomer, too, had experienced a period of leisure and plenty, only to be weakened morally,

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of prosperity and her interest in material wealth has ever
shadowed any spiritual growth. Israel is selfish. She has
forgotten her debt to Jehovah. Sodom, too, had experienced a
period of leisure and plenty, only to be weakened morally,

and so lose her sense of reverence for her husband and God. But the priests have failed to instruct the people! Naturally enough, the ignorance of God is the root of all social evil. What is the good of a prophet trying to reprove or reform, if his words are only contradicted by the priests? How can he, Hosea, influence his wife, if the priests lay snares to steal her love from her husband? How can Jehovah induce Israel to live righteously, if the priests advocate worship of these foreign gods? The priests are no more than a company of drunkards, whose immoral behavior with the sacred prostitutes, is the vilest snare of all! It is no wonder that the prophet condemned the superstitious claims of the priesthood, -- the orgies in wood and stone, which stared vacantly at the throngs who succumbed to their stupid faces. And it is little wonder that Hosea predicted disaster for the priests whose teachings were probably directly responsible for Gomer's defeat! Sympathetic with others whose lives had been wrecked, or were about to be wrecked, the prophet longed for an annihilation of these leaders whose words mercilessly intrigued helpless women, as innocent as Gomer had been, and left them desolate, to perish in their own sin.

2. Hosea grasped the significance of true worship.

He denounced Israel for its lack of understanding concerning the meaning of true worship. To consult wooden gods is stupid

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2. Hosea changed the significance of true worship.

He denounced Israel for its lack of understanding concerning
 the meaning of true worship. To commit wood's sins is stupid

indeed! Jehovah has been neglected for idols, and whoredom has dominated the spirit of the people. To Jehovah the prophet attributes man-like qualities and a personality, befitting a husband who is much in love with his wife. It is pathetic to know that Israel, God's own nation, has chosen to follow the "stock," rather than the God to whom Israel owes a debt of gratitude, at least. Verse thirteen of chapter four reads: "... and they have gone a whoring from under their God." The phrase, "from under," is used¹ to express the subjection of a wife to her husband. The sacrifices upon the tops of mountains do not constitute Jehovah worship, for the sacrifices are accompanied by adulterous practices. Gomer herself had misunderstood the true meaning of Jehovah worship, and had prostituted herself to the Baalim with the idea that this was her contribution to the sacrificial worship. To associate Jehovah with such diabolical consecrations was repulsive to Hosea who knew that God was offended by such abominable practices in the name of religion. He warns the people that if they continue to sacrifice their flocks and herds to the Baalim they will lose Jehovah, for the true God cannot accept unclean rites² offered instead of true worship. Gomer's sacrificial in-

1 Brown, HOS, pp. 44; cf. Ro. VII:2 (Gk.)

2 Hosea 5:6.

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dulgences had been too idolatrous for Hosea to tolerate; thus Gomer had to leave home, when her husband could no longer live with such a character.

"For I desire mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings."¹ Israel has played the harlot: "for thou hast gone a whoring from thy God, thou hast loved hire upon every corn floor."² Jehovah deplores Israel's false religion in His honor. She has broken her covenant with God, but she pretends that the bond still exists. There is no true spirit of worship, for Israel, restless in her desire for material wealth, has turned to the man-made Baal gods, until at last the former conception of worship has completely deteriorated. Without the right idea of worship, Israel cannot commune with God, and without this necessary communion, the purpose of life is lost. The physical appetite, as well as the spiritual must be satisfied, but the Baal gods can satisfy neither. Israel has accepted Jehovah's gifts; she has eaten the sacrifices, but she has forgotten the needs of her own soul.³ So too, Gomer's soul had been subjected to her whims for sensuous pleasures and material finery. Worship, to Gomer, consisted in licentious living in honor of the Baalim, and in the name of Jehovah,

1 Hosea 6:6.

2 Hosea 9:1.

3 Hosea 9:17.

delicacies had been too delicious for Moses to tolerate;

thus Moses had to leave home, when her husband could no

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1. Hosea 6:6.
 2. Hosea 8:1.
 3. Hosea 9:17.

-- a worship which severed all connections between Gomer and Jehovah, and Gomer and Hosea. Because Israel will not hearken to the words of God, she will become a wanderer among the nations,¹ a plight similar to Gomer's; when Gomer refused her husband's counsel, she was obliged to become a wanderer, a woman unwanted, even by her paramours.

Israel is ever ready to serve the priests, for their demands are merely for external worship. To obey Jehovah is far more difficult, since the obedience he demands roots deep in the fabric of the soul itself. But service to the priests will soon become cold and expire, for there is no spark of faithfulness to enliven it. Gomer's service to the foreign gods soon lost its glow when her faith turned to distrust and fear. So insidiously have the leaders of Israel entwined sin with religion that the gradual growth of worship which omitted Jehovah was hardly noticeable. By perverting the will of Israel, the priests successfully deceived the nation. Gomer too, gradually became ensnared with the fascinations of the Baalim until at last she forgot the commandments of God. It took suffering and solitude to recall to her mind the teachings of her husband regarding the worship of Jehovah. Surely, in her misery, Gomer must have called upon the true God, hoping for a quick recovery. But her heart was too

1 Hosea 9:17.

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the teachings of her husband regarding the worship of Jehovah.

Surely, in her misery, Gomer must have cried upon the lips

God, hoping for a quick recovery. But her heart was too

saturated in the deeds of the past. Both Gomer and Israel must be purified gradually, and thoroughly, before they can commune once again with Jehovah.

3.) The prophet had a very definite conception of the character of God.

Hosea ascribes to Jehovah a quality of love, far superior to the common interpretation of the word. God is comparable to the master who cares for the beast, to the physician who heals his patient, to the father who loves his child, and to the husband who loves his wife; that is, Jehovah embodies the necessary characteristics of a true husband who protects, shares, heals, sympathizes, and loves. Jehovah is capable of restoring a soul lost in a maze of difficulty and misery. Love is inclusive of justice, appreciation and mercy.

In the early years of Israel's existence, Jehovah released her from oppression in Egypt. As a father leads a child who is just learning to walk, God helped Israel to find¹ the way out of the wilderness. Jehovah's love for Israel is supreme: "I drew them with the cords of a man, with bands of love; and I was to them that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat before them."² No father could love as perfectly as the heavenly father, whose compassion is so

1 Hosea 11:1.

2 Hosea 11:4.

great that he is reluctant to punish even a sinful nation.

"How shall I give thee up Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? ... mine heart is turned within me, my compassions are kindled together.¹"

God is as weary of the false promises of Israel, as Hosea, whose wife was likewise undependable in her promises. However, God is merciful, and like Hosea he would rather find some other way of justice than that of causing the object of his affection to suffer. The prophet compares Jehovah to himself: is not God just as unhappy in losing the children whom He, as a father had loved and cared for from infancy, as Hosea in losing children whom he had watched grow, and for whom he had provided food and shelter with the tenderness of a loving father?

Hosea recognized God's infinity, his wisdom, goodness, and power. He knew that God's perfect holiness caused Him to love all that is good and hate all that is evil. To say that the prophet recognized in himself these qualities, characteristic of Jehovah, is not to acknowledge that Hosea was possessed with a self-satisfaction in his own righteousness; rather, the prophet had discovered through his marriage experience that justice and love in an infinite Being are no different than justice and love in a human being. True, Hosea knew

1 Hosea 11:8.

that man could not approach the perfection of God, whose knowledge was so superior that He was saved from error; however, he realized something that Christ later emphasized, -- that goodness is possible to all men, that love of God through fellow-men makes man more like God, Himself. Hosea knew that perfection was within the realm of human effort, else why the reprimands for imperfection? Sincerity in his demands caused him to search for these God-like qualities. To attain perfection, Hosea knew that communion with the infinite spirit was necessary. Naturally enough he saw that sin and its attendant disaster caused an obstruction to this communion of man with God. The prophet believed that men were made to act out the purposes of Jehovah, whose purposes are as unalterable as the Creator Himself. How could Israel appreciate the divinity of God as long as she was blinded by fear or by jealousy of other nations, or by debauchery within her own government? How could Israel become God-like with no understanding of Jehovah's love and plans? And how could Israel receive the message of God when she was not in a receptive mood? So natural are God's laws that the prophet had difficulty in answering objections and in assuring the people that his prophecies were true. From his experience with Gomer, he gleaned the following ideas relative to God's laws:

- a.) Excess in eating, drinking, or revelry of any

kind leads to disastrous consequences.

b.) Lasciviousness violates the law of cleanliness, and results in disease, death, and pollution of the offspring. Gomer was but representative of the many in Israel who lived licentiously and paid the penalty.

c.) Pretense and injustice are contrary to the laws of truth and justice, and result in murders, wars, and in personal oppressions. Gomer had allied herself with false lovers, only to discover too late that she had been defeated in her desire for material gains. Likewise, Israel will discover, too late, that alliances with foreign nations, and their gods will bring disaster.

The love which God has for Israel is so supreme that God is willing to punish for the purpose of cleansing. Jehovah has warned through the natural results of sin, but the people are too negligent of these warnings, and as a result a new siege of suffering awaits them. God is dishonored by the behavior of his wife.

Dominant in the prophet's mind is the idea that Israel should have one God, just as Gomer should have one husband.

Clearly, Hosea regarded the faithfulness of Jehovah as one of his divine characteristics. God entered into a covenant with Israel, and God never broke a promise. What a contrast to the heathen deities! God's will never changes, for His will is true without error, and never failing. Strange-

kind leads to disastrous consequences.

b.) Individualism violates the law of righteousness, and results in disease, death, and pollution of the spirit. Gomer was but representative of the many in Israel who lived licentiously and paid the penalty.

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The love which God has for Israel is so intense that God is willing to punish for the purpose of cleansing. Jehovah has warned through the natural results of sin, but the people are contemptuous of these warnings, and as a result a new siege of suffering awaits them. God is dishonored by the behavior of his wife.

Dominate in the prophet's mind is the idea that Israel should have no God, just as Gomer should have no husband. Clearly, Hosea regarded the faithfulness of Jehovah as one of his divine characteristics. God entered into a covenant with Israel, and God never broke a promise. What a contrast to the heathen deities! God's will never changes, for his will is true without error, and never failing. Strange-

ly enough, there is no bond but His love. When all other promises fail, and alliances with lovers, or foreign nations prove valueless, what a consolation it is to return to the God whose word is truth, and whose inflexible faithfulness gives the protection so necessary to security and peace of mind. Surely, Gomer must have considered Hosea her savior, when in the midst of her suffering, he rescued her and took her home. Hosea had remained faithful, even after Gomer had dishonored his name. During this time the prophet must have sensed more deeply than ever the abiding spirit of God; he must have poured out his grief upon Jehovah, whose promises never fail.

Not only does the prophet reveal God's faithfulness in this bond of love, but he also portrays Jehovah's faithfulness in the accomplishment of all His threats; but more important than that, Hosea indicates that God is faithful to the holiness in Himself. According to His unalterable laws, sin must be punished; nevertheless, it is well to add, that the prophet sees God as a judge sentencing the criminal according to the degree or amount of his sin. True, all of Israel must suffer for the sins of a few, but in the final analysis the mental anguish and physical torments will be the result of personal sin; God punishes according to the iniquities of the individual. Although Gomer deserved punishment, her husband could not bear to watch her suffering, when he

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ties of the individual. Although Gomer deserved punishment,

her husband could not bear to watch her suffering, when he

remembered the righteousness of her youth. When Hosea found Gomer in the slave market he knew that without her, life for him had been empty and unhappy. So too, he sensed God's relationship to Israel: without Israel's love, God is unhappy; Israel will suffer, but God is merciful and will spare her life, when finally she will repent of her sins. Hosea's love for Gomer was changeless, and thus comparable to God's unceasing tenderness. It is significant to note that the prophet grasped a fundamental principle, a principle which a good teacher would wish to adopt; namely, that of applying his message to everyday life. Lest the words used to describe Jehovah become merely allusive terms, Hosea pointed out through his own biography, that the divine love of God is a love which can be understood by arousing in a person that which is embodied in a real life situation. Sympathetic listeners would quite naturally appreciate the unhappy condition of the lover-husband of a rebellious wife, and as a result the application to Jehovah, as the lover-husband of Israel, a wayward nation, would become all the more potent. Without this human experience as a background, it would have been difficult to present an account of a God who is not insensible or indifferent, but benevolent, loving, and compassionate.

Hosea's love for Gomer came close to the divine, for even his pain over his wife's deception did not disfigure

his love for her. The ordinary reaction toward an unfaithful wife would be at first one of jealousy, for the intruding lovers, and then finally repulsion for an unchaste woman. However, the prophet's love remained unchanged; he did consider his wife deserving of punishment, but only for the purpose of purification. Hosea's love enabled him to be patient during the long wait for his wife's repentance. After the prophet had cared for her lovingly, kindly, she robbed him of his honor, happiness, and his home life. Such conduct was infernal, for kindness seems to require at least a sense of gratitude, even on the part of a dog. Hosea was forced to feel the sting of his wife's corruption, -- but he loved her, none the less. He could see the more clearly the ingratitude of Israel toward Jehovah. To say that the prophet did not exercise discipline sufficiently to gain the respect of his wife would be to contradict Hosea's ideal of love, as a means of influence for righteousness. He knew that force could not win his wife, and that fear of disaster was too low a level upon which to base worship of God. He knew that love can conquer all, body and soul, but force only conquers the physical. He was certain that God's laws are immutable, -- and that suffering is bound to come where sin is prevalent. No luke-warm half-truths satisfied Hosea, for he had come into perfect fellowship with Jehovah whose very spirit penetrated his soul, and demanded that he

practice divine love. Hosea believed that the exercise of divine love led to holiness, -- that quality possessed by Jehovah.

A beautiful verse revealing God's character reads as follows: "I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man, the Holy One in the midst of thee: and I will not enter into the city."¹ Mercy triumphs over judgment, and Ephraim shall be spared. God is not man and is not moved by human whims. Ephraim is penitent and begging for mercy, and God will be merciful. He will not punish for early wrongs as man would do; rather, he accepts the nation as she comes, penitent and willing to serve God. In Hosea's own experience, mercy-triumphed over judgment. How much easier it was for him to see a merciful God when Hosea himself was merciful. It is quite generally understood that those characteristics which we see in others are usually the characteristics which best describe our own personalities. Hosea's interpretation of Jehovah was a high recommendation for a prophet. Certainly during his hours of remorse over a disloyal wife, he had the opportunity to become bitter, and hardened. To be spurned by the one he loved would wound his pride just as naturally as it would any normal man.

1 Hosea 11:9.

But in his trouble he turned to Jehovah and learned through the agony of his experience that though he be torn and smitten, yet God will heal and bind up wounds with His enduring power of infinite love.

There is a difference of opinion in regard to the originality of the concept of love as associated with Jehovah. We are certain, however, that in Hosea we find a greater emphasis on love than ever before. "It was only when the love of God was revealed in Jesus Christ, that it was seen to have for each believer, whether Jew or Gentile, all that personal tenderness and depth which Hosea invests the relation of Jahweh to his people Israel."¹ Hosea clearly defined the realm for the further development of the study of Jehovah. He made his practice of religion strictly ethical, adding tenderness and mercy to the work of Amos. He learned that love is the great teacher, and that punishment alone effects nothing. Perhaps the prophet had tried different forms of punishment upon his wife before she was forced to leave home. If he did he probably discovered that such treatment only antagonized and caused further rebellion. His pleas with Gomer were numerous; he hoped to be able to persuade her to leave the Baalim before it was too late, but he soon discovered that these pleas were

¹ Brown, HOS, p. xxxiii.

at in its capacity to control its own destiny and to determine
the course of its development. It is not a passive recipient of
external forces, but an active participant in the process of
its own growth and development.
There is a distinction between the two concepts of the
individual. The first is the concept of the individual as a
being, a creature of God, who is created in the image and
likeness of God. The second is the concept of the individual
as a person, a being who is capable of self-determination
and self-direction. The first concept is based on the
idea of God as the creator of all things, and the second
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of no avail with one already steeped in sin. The prophet was so well acquainted with human nature that he could look ahead and see in the future the inevitable punishment awaiting Israel, as it had awaited Gomer; but more than that he could see the goodness of God who punished to redeem through love. This vision came as a direct result of the prophet's marital experience. Finally, Hosea saw his resemblance to God for both were victims of unrequited love; although both were spurned and rejected in the final settlement of affairs, both will be vindicated.

B. Political teachings in relation to the Marriage Experience.

1.) Hosea unflinchingly condemned the government of his people. The prophet tells how the rulers love shame¹ and vice, and pervert justice. The priests, some of the people of Israel who are not official leaders, and the king² and his followers have placed snares at Mizpah and Tabor, and upon these classes of people, the prophet passes judgment. "They made the king glad with their wickedness, and the³ princes with their lies." The king rejoiced when Israel shared with him the practices of idolatry, which gave the new gods precedence over Jehovah. Even on a festal occasion in his honor, the king joined in a carousal with the princes

1 Hosea 4:18.

2 Hosea 5:1.

3 Hosea 7:3.

and showed his weakness for wine.¹ Such behavior is conducive to scheming revolts and murders; while the princes pretend that all is well, they make traitorous plans to dethrone the king and gain power for themselves. "For they have made ready their heart like an oven, whiles they lie in wait, their baker sleepeth all the night. In the morning it burneth as a flame. They are all hot as an oven and devour their judges; all their kings are fallen."² Several of Israel's idolatrous kings, Zechariah, Shallum, Pekahiah, and Pekah were murdered as a result of the abandonment of Jehovah worship. No good could possibly come from such activities; wine alone was sufficient to blind the senses to impending disaster, but this was no excuse, for according to Hosea, the thirst for wine betrayed weakness. Had not Gomer deceived herself when she accepted the ways of the cult? Wine and sensuous living caused her to think only of the present, until finally her state of debauchery was beyond remedy.

"They have set up kings, but not by me; they have made princes, and I knew it not; of their silver and their gold have they made idols that they may be cut off."³ None of the princes or kings was anointed of Jehovah. The Baal worship which the kings encouraged severed any connections

1 Hosea 7:5.
 2 Hosea 7:6,7.
 3 Hosea 8:4.

1

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"They have set up kings, but not by me; they have
made princes, and I know it not; of their silver and their
gold have they made idols that they may be out of." None
of the princes or kings was associated of Jehovah. The God
which the kings worshipped severed any connection

- 1. Hosea 7:2.
- 2. Hosea 7:3, 4.
- 3. Hosea 8:4.

which might have existed between Jehovah and Israel. "As¹ for Samaria, her king is cut off, as foam upon the water." Already several kings have been assassinated. With the weak government of Israel, the kings become even more contemptible in their lack of leadership.

Where now is thy king, that he may save thee in all thy cities? And thy judges, of whom thou saidst, Give me a king and princes? I have given thee a king in mine anger,² and have taken him away in my wrath." All the verses cited indicate Israel's offense against Jehovah, in choosing to serve kings, no better than heathen monarchs, and certainly not annointed according to the will of Jehovah. The prophet's condemnation of godless rulers was all the more emphatic because of his experience with Gomer. Gomer had offended Hosea as well as Jehovah, when she agreed to accept the examples set by the rulers of the nation. Sin is its own punishment, says the prophet as he points to the self-chosen kings, who have met death as a result of their own evil policies. Will Israel ever learn to sort from the bad the good which Jehovah would have increased for the furtherance of His kingdom? Or is it possible that like Gomer, Israel is too easily influenced by material things, which soon pass away? Because the kings and leaders rejoice in doing evil must Israel

1 Hosea 10:7.

2 Hosea 13:10, 11.

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1 Hosea 10:7.
2 Hosea 13:10, 11.

like Gomer follow the example of godless men? Probably Hosea pled with his wife to see the falsity of the kings. Gomer like most women must have had some pride; but she probably did not realize that her personality was being absorbed by the crowd; that the influences for evil were many, and that the influences for good few, and that the program outlined for her and the rest of her sex by the leaders, religious and political was merely a trap to take her to an untimely death. Hosea knew that his beliefs were contrary to those beliefs about him, and that many scorned his teachings. He must have become very weary when his pleadings had no effect, either on his wife or on Israel. How much easier it must have been for Hosea to sympathize with a God whose warnings likewise had been to no avail. The rulers lived unmindful of the words of Jehovah, and naturally it was the fashion for the people of Israel to follow these public examples. It was probably a common occurrence for a wife to leave her husband and children in order to join the Baalim sanctioned by the kings and priests. How easy it was for Israel to leave Jehovah! How easy it was for Gomer to leave Hosea. Surely there must be great rewards awaiting her in this new cult, -- else why the great following? Numbers must count for something. The kings are addicts; that is the reason for the contagion of this destructive cult!

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this new cult, -- and why the great following? Where was
going for teaching. The king was adding; that is the
reason for the cessation of this destructive cult!

2.) The prophet attempted to show the futility of alliances with foreign nations.

Ephraim, he mixeth himself among the peoples; Ephraim is a cake not turned. Strangers have devoured his strength and he knoweth it not.¹ Israel has allied herself with other nations; she has accepted some of the foreign customs along with her own practices. Her policies are neither Israelitish, nor foreign, since she caters to her allies as well as to Israel. She is neither one way nor the other, for like a cake half-baked she has lost her usefulness. Foreign nations have sapped her strength to the extent that Israel is about to lose all the power she ever possessed. Hosea saw the folly of allying with nations desirous of gaining prosperity at the cost of Israel. How like his own wife is Israel; foolishly, Gomer had permitted herself to be betrayed by intrigues. Israel, like Gomer, fled, first to one lover, and then to another, not knowing where to find lasting strength. In spite of the fact that Israel is no longer a maiden, and her hair is becoming gray,² she still believes herself attractive to her lovers. Little does she realize that death will soon overtake her. Gomer too, had considered herself beautiful to her paramours; she defied the years even though they left their marks of immorality upon her. Both Israel and Gomer

1 Hosea 7:8,9.

2 Hosea 7:9.

lost the attractiveness that accompanies virtue; Israel is getting old, but like Gomer she cannot see oncoming disaster and she has no thought of turning to Jehovah, the restorer of strength and beauty of character.¹ As silly as a dove without understanding, Gomer in her indecision found no satisfaction in her paramours. Ephraim is like a dove, for she flies first to Assyria and then to Egypt, but to no avail.² When Hosea learned that his pleas had no meaning to Gomer he permitted her to go in search of her paramours, although he knew that her lovers would bring her no happiness. Disaster awaited her, but only disaster would bring her to an understanding of God's will. Likewise, when Israel like a silly dove, flew to other nations, Jehovah predicted misfortune when he said: "I will spread my net upon them; I will bring them down as the fowls of the heaven: I will chastise them...."³ Woe unto Gomer and Israel who have fled from the righteousness of Jehovah! They will be ensnared in their own wicked ways.⁴ They have not cried unto Jehovah from the depths of their souls; rather, they have "howled" and begged for food as from a Baal god. Israel is ungrateful for all that God has done for her, just as Gomer was unappreciative of Hosea's gifts to her. Now that the material blessings are disappearing, "they return but not to him that is on high;

1 Hosea 7:10.

2 Hosea 7:11.

3 Hosea 7:12.

4 Hosea 7:13.

they are like a deceitful bow.¹ Thus the prophet predicts that "their princes shall fall by the sword for the rage of their tongue; this shall be their derision in the land of Egypt."² Jehovah is indignant when Israel associates Him with the Baal gods, or inculcates into Jehovah worship the obnoxious qualities of the foreign elements of worship. The people return, but not whole-heartedly; Jehovah demands true repentance, not sham!

Assyria is an enemy, not a friend. Like an eagle Assyria will swoop upon Israel, and destroy her who has forgotten Jehovah,³ but has remembered the calf, -- the calf of Samaria, which eventually will be broken in pieces.⁴ "For they sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind."⁵ The labors of Israel will yield no profits for unrighteousness reaps unrighteousness, a conception none other than a product of Hosea's relationship with Gomer. Soon Israel will be a captive, and as a despised people, she will lose her national power and be subjected to the Gentiles. Israel is called a "vessel wherein there is no pleasure," alluding to her unclean and infectious nature, as comparable to an old, filthy skin-bottle or vessel, which has been discarded for something clean and new.⁶ The prophet was not only referring to the

1 Hosea 7:16.
 2 Hosea 7:16.
 3 Hosea 8:1.
 4 Hosea 8:6.
 5 Hosea 8:7.
 6 Hosea 8:8.

uncleanliness of Israel, but also to the soiled condition of his own wife, who also might be compared to an old, corrupt vessel, of no use except for infectious purposes, and certainly not an ornament of beauty.

¹
In the next verse Israel is spoken of as resembling a wild ass. Israel is wild when she persists in going alone to seek Assyria; so too, Gomer chose to go her own wilful way in seeking her paramours. The words: "Ephraim hath hired ² lovers" stand out as indications of the association which the prophet saw between his own wife and Israel. "Because Ephraim hath multiplied altars to sin, altars have been unto him to ³ sin"; that is, the more Israel erects altars for sacrifices to these foreign gods, the more sinful she becomes. How characteristic of Gomer, the more sinful she becomes. How characteristic of Gomer, whose sin increased with her worship of foreign gods, and associations with paramours.

⁴
Israel's heart is divided, in her desire to serve Jehovah as well as the Baalim; none of her alliances with Egypt or Assyria have the sincerity necessary for a real understanding between nations. Israel caters to two masters, and fails to serve either one faithfully enough to secure protection. "They speak vain words, swearing falsely in making covenants: therefore, judgment springeth up as hem-

1 Hosea 8:9.

2 Hosea 8:9.

3 Hosea 8:11.

4 Hosea 10:2.

lock in the furrows of the field." Israel had no right to ally herself with foreign nations when she had no intention of keeping her part of the covenant. Gomer had been of a divided mind, promising faithfulness to Hosea, and at the same time allying herself with paramours. For Hosea to watch his wife turn first to Jehovah, and then the Baal gods, and later to both Jehovah and the Baal gods at the same time, must have convinced the prophet of the indecision and mental torture which his wife was experiencing. He loved his wife and to see her in difficulties brought grief to him, just as grief came to Jehovah when he saw Israel in her indecision. But grief soon changes to indignation when repeated supplications and warnings fail to arouse a nation to a sense of her obligations. Israel will decide too late that Jehovah is the only true God. Gomer could not reach this decision until she had experienced the pangs of hunger, loneliness and pain; -- and now, Israel must suffer in order to clarify her mind. "The inhabitants of Samaria shall be in terror for the calves of Beth Aven: for the people thereof shall mourn over it, and the priest thereof that rejoiced over it, for the glory of it, because it departed from it." Soon it will be too late to remedy her ways, since Israel continues to be reluctant to accept God's will. When the calves of Beth Aven

1 Hosea 10:4.

2 Hosea 10:5.

look in the furrows of the field. I Israel had no right to ally herself with foreign nations when she had no intention of keeping her part of the covenant. Gomer had been of a divided mind, promising faithfulness to Hosea, and at the same time allying herself with paramours. For Hosea to warn his wife turn first to Jehovah, and then the Yael gods, and later to both Jehovah and the Yael gods at the same time, must have convinced the prophet of the indecision and mental torture which his wife was experiencing. He loved his wife and to see her in difficulties brought grief to him, just as grief came to Jehovah when he saw Israel in her indecision. But grief soon changes to indignation when repeated supplications and warnings fail to arouse a nation to a sense of her obligations. Israel will decide too late that Jehovah is the only true God. Gomer could not reach this decision until she had experienced the pangs of hunger, loneliness and pain; -- and now, Israel must utter in order to clarify her mind, "The iniquities of Samaria shall be in terror for the palace of Beth Aven; for the people thereof shall mourn over it, and the priests thereof that rejoiced over it, for the glory of it, because it departed from it." Soon it will be too late to remedy her ways, since Israel continues to be reluctant to accept God's will. When the slaves of Beth Aven

1 Hosea 16:14.
2 Hosea 10:15.

are destroyed, and Israel herself is taken captive, she will mourn that she ever pledged even a partial allegiance to such useless, man-made gods. Israel is not willing to admit that Jehovah is no longer her God, and that foreign idols are worshipped in preference to the true God. But Hosea points out that Israel must chose either the idols, or Jehovah, for both cannot be served at one time. Ironically, the prophet says, "Let the men that sacrifice, kiss the calves,"¹ and publicly acknowledge their allegiance to the idols. A true-minded Jew would be ashamed to follow this ancient custom of paying homage to an idol by a kiss; but let him be tested in this way! Either accept these foreign gods wholeheartedly, or not at all! To Hosea a divided mind betrayed a great weakness. His own wife had to be tested in her sincerity for her lovers, and so he gave her the opportunity to follow her paramours, no longer in secret but openly in the eyes of family and friends. What a horrible sacrifice Gomer made when she gave up the one who loved her dearly, and turned to the false promises of lovers who were soon to betray her. Gomer had her test, and learned through the anguish of heart, of body, and of mind, that Hosea's God is the only true God. Now Israel must be tested, for Jehovah is about to cease his warnings, and permit the rebellious nation to worship heathen

1 Hosea 13:2.

2 Hosea 13:7,8.

gods; but Israel must worship these gods whole-heartedly, since Jehovah will withdraw his help from Israel. The test has come. Will Israel discover the right way when it is too late? Or is she far-sighted enough to realize the impending disaster? Gomer paid the penalty. Will Israel likewise suffer the consequences? No doubt Israel, like Gomer, is blinded by the practices of the day. Gomer's lovers had devoured her spiritually, and had left her body a prey to the merciless Baal followers. Israel too will be the victim of ferocious attacks. The Assyrians are represented as savage beasts, drinking the blood, and ravaging the flesh of helpless Israel." "Therefore am I unto them as a lion, as a leopard will I watch by the way: I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will rend the caul of their heart: and there will I devour them like a lion; the wild beast will¹ tear them."

Israel has caused her own destruction, just as Gomer² suffered from her own evil tendencies. "It is thy help." How can Jehovah help Israel when she persists in refusing His counsel? How could Hosea protect a wife who defied his plans for her comfort?

C. Social Teachings in relation to the marriage experience.

1 Hosea 13:7,8.

2 Hosea 13:9.

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 since Jehovah will withdraw his help from Israel. The test
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Israel has caused her own destruction, just as Israel
 suffered from her own evil tendencies. "It is thy help." How
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 counsel? How could Moses protect a wife who belied his plans
 for her comfort?

C. Social Conditions in relation to the marriage ceremony.

1. Moses 13:7, 8.
 2. Moses 13:9.

1.) The prophet was emphatic in his condemnation of the moral degeneracy, for his life with Gomer made him realize the treachery of deceit and the suffering accompanying unfaithfulness. "There is nought but swearing and breaking faith, and killing and committing adultery, and blood touch-¹eth blood." It is probable that by the "swearing" mentioned² above is meant "false swearing" and in that case, the sins of false swearing and breaking faith would necessarily relate to faithlessness, so evident in the character of Gomer. As for the prophet's inclusion of adultery, it is hardly important to repeat that this sin in his wife constituted the peak of the prophet's sorrow. As Hosea points out, one sin leads to another. The people of Israel frequently commit murder, a natural consequence of immoral behavior. Punishment is at hand: "Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish with the beasts of the field and the birds of the heavens; yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away."³ No longer will Israel be blessed with fertility, and without fruitful crops, her children will waste away. Even the beasts and fowls will die without food. How significant this must have been to Hosea, whose wife had left home, a place of warmth and comfort, where food was plenteous. Gomer had rejected Hosea, as Israel had forgotten her God, and

1 Hosea 4:2.

2 Brown, HOS, p. 39.

3 Hosea 4:3.

1. The prophet was anxious in his condemnation of

the moral degeneracy, for his life with Gomer and his terrible
the presence of baseness and the suffering accompanying un-
faithfulness. "There is enough but sweating and breaking
heart, and killing and unrelenting animosity, and blood shed
even blood." It is probable that by the "sweating" mentioned
above is meant "false sweating" and in that case, the sins of
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Gomer had rejected Hosea, as Israel had forgotten her God, and

1. Hosea 4:13.
2. Brown, *Hosea*, p. 39.
3. Hosea 4:13.

to both, punishment was inevitable. No punishment, in the mind of the prophet, could be greater than that of discovering the inefficacy of the gods believed to be so powerful. Soon Israel will discover that the Baalim cannot satisfy, just as Gomer discovered that the lure of her paramours was not permanent.

Since whoredom is a common partner of wine,¹ appeals for moral behavior are of little value unless drunken revelries can be abolished. Hosea knew that wine takes away the understanding and perverts the will. It is through wine, says the prophet, that the priests intrigue the people to sinfulness. No doubt, Hosea pled with Gomer to use her reason, but she must have been too emotionally upset, and too enthralled with the wine and harlotry of the Baal Cult, to listen to her husband.

Israel is compared to a stubborn heifer which rebels² against the master's commands. Quite similarly, Hosea must have regarded his wife, for he knew that obstinacy had a part at least, in her refusal to accept her husband's mild yoke. But if Israel and Gomer rebel against their masters, how can³ they expect to be cared for as lambs in a shepherd's fold?

"Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone,"⁴ says the prophet. Ephraim, or northern Israel, has left Jehovah for

1 Hosea 4:11.

2 Hosea 4:16.

3 Hosea 4:16.

4 Hosea 4:17.

idols, and it is too late to attempt a rescue. Clearly the symbol is that of the relation of husband and wife. "...they shall be ashamed because of their sacrifices." When Israel¹ is conquered, she will be ashamed in the face of her enemies, ashamed of her ignorance in the worshipping of gods of wood -- Gomer had been ashamed in the presence of her lovers: She too had discovered that her sacrifices were fruitless. Israel, like Gomer has an impulse for harlotry, and such an impulse is not conducive to Jehovah worship. "Their doings will not suffer them to turn unto their God; for the spirit of whoredom² is within them. . . "

Verse seven of chapter five shows that in his teachings, the prophet had his own personal experience in mind. "They (people of Israel) have dealt treacherously against the Lord; for they have borne strange children." Gomer had been a treacherous wife; she had broken the marriage contract because of the lure of the Baal cults, and finally she had given her husband children whom he was unable to recognize. Similarly, Jehovah does not know the new generation of Israel's children, for they possess tendencies, which He as a father is not responsible for. Nor does Jehovah wish an evil race to increase in numbers. Jehovah is quoted as making a drastic

1 Hosea 4:19.

2 Hosea 5:4.

promise, whereby Israel will receive a portion of her deserved punishment: "As for Ephraim, their glory shall fly away like a bird: there shall be no birth, and none with child, and no conception. Though they bring up their children, yet will I¹ bereave them, that there be not a man left." To predict childlessness to a nation which prided itself in fruitfulness was to predict a horrible curse. Hosea knew that such conduct as the Baal cult encouraged was a menace to chastity, and as such, a menace to the home. A happy family life was no longer an ideal. The prophet knew the curse of unchastity, for Gomer had illustrated this fact time and again. Whether Hosea had reference to the diseased minds and bodies which often accompany immorality and which often result in childlessness, or in physical and mental handicaps to the offspring, we cannot say, but surely he must have been acquainted with the facts, for "History in many periods leave confirmed the justice of his observations,² and by one strong voice after another enforced his warnings."

The high places of Israel shall be destroyed, says Hosea, and in the fear and helplessness which will dominate the nation there will be a cry for death, "And the people shall say unto the mountains, Cover us; and to the hills, Fall on us."³ Death will be preferable to the shame and misery of remaining a cap-

1 Hosea 9:11, 12.

2 Smith, TP, pp. 305-310.

3 Hosea 10:8.

tive nation. When Gomer at last realized the infidelity of her paramours, and the fate that inevitably awaits a harlot, she must have had periods of fear and depression over the horror of her shame; she must have longed for death as the last means of escape. Surely, it would befit Gomer to cry, "Fall on me, O sanctuaries; bury me that I may escape the snares laid by my lovers; let me die and so forget my shame!"

2.) Hosea insisted upon personal purity. Only by individual cleanliness can a nation become chaste. Some of those who sin are not entirely responsible for they have been led into snares by religious and political leaders. Thus punishment will be measured accordingly. "I will not punish¹ your daughters when they commit whoredom...", for as Hosea notes, the fathers of the children offer sacrifices with the temple prostitutes and naturally enough the children become licentious with the parents. Whether Gomer's parents are alluded to here, we cannot say, although it is possible that her parents were addicts to the Baal Cult. The idea of personal purity was uppermost in the prophet's mind, for his wife had been unable to escape the demoralizing influences around her; she was not strong enough to uphold her own chastity. Had her belief in Hosea's teachings been confirmed, and had the outside influences been less attractive, this question of per-

1 Smith, TP, pp. 305-310.

five nations. When Gomer at last realized the futility of her paranoias, and the fact that inevitably awaits a nation, she must have had periods of fear and depression over the horror of her shame; she must have looked for death as the last means of escape. Surely, it would have been to cry, "Fall on me, O murderers; bury me that I may escape the shame laid by my lovers; let me die and so forget my shame!"

2. Homer insisted upon personal purity. Only by

individual cleanliness can a nation become greater. Some of those who are not entirely responsible for they have been led into sin by religious and political leaders. This pur-
 tainment will be measured accordingly. "I will not punish your daughters when they commit whoredoms..." for as Homer notes, the fathers of the children offer sacrifices with the temple prostitutes and naturally enough the children become identical with the parents. Whether Gomer's parents are alluded to here, we cannot say, although it is possible that her parents were allude to the real Gomer. The idea of personal purity was important in the prophet's mind, for his wife had been unable to escape the demoralizing influences around her; she was not strong enough to uphold her own chastity. Had her belief in Homer's teaching been confirmed, and had the outside influences been less attractive, this question of per-

sonal purity might not have arisen. As a nation, Israel has much to learn if she is to remain as God's chosen people. "Though thou, Israel, play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend...."¹, that is, Israel is unchaste, and it behooves Judah to maintain her personal purity by refusing to imitate the iniquitous practices of Israel. Frequently Israel is called a harlot, indicating that Hosea's criticism of the nation was based upon his criticism of a harlot-wife.

Jehovah says, "I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hid from me: for now, O Ephraim, thou hast committed whoredom."² Hosea knew the intimate character of his wife, and no matter how hard she might try to conceal her mistakes, the prophet was able to sense her needs and difficulties. So too, Jehovah knows the prevailing tendencies of Israel, who in her impurity cannot hide from the eyes of her husband.

In verse thirteen of chapter thirteen, Hosea predicts that the sorrows of a travailing woman shall come upon Israel (now referred to as an unwise son) for Israel is not doing her share in the birth process. Israel persists in tarrying in the womb, thus causing unnecessary suffering to the mother. S. L. Brown says that at this period of his ministry, Hosea³ saw no second birth of purification for Israel. So too, the

1 Hosea 4:15.

2 Hosea 5:3.

3 Brown, HOS, pp. 114, 115.

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1. Hosea 2:13.
 2. Hosea 2:13.
 3. Brown, Hosea, pp. 114, 115.

iniquities of Gomer had been so numerous that the prophet had been unable to see a second birth for her. Israel, like Gomer, must be born again in order to regain her chastity which was her personal heritage from Jehovah; this rebirth must be the result of purification from sins.

It is interesting to note that the teachings of the Prophet are so closely related to his marriage that he cannot help using terms which reveal this ever present experience. Harlot, lovers, paramours, husband, wife; birth, jealousy, love, purity, impurity, punishment, and mercy are but a few of the words indicative of the prophet's mind-set.

3.) Sin had become such a habit with Israel that even loud warnings were unheeded. "Blow ye the cornet in Gibeah, and the trumpet in Ramah. Sound an alarm at Beth-¹aven, behind thee, O Benjamin." It is impossible for Israel to realize the coming disaster for she is too steeped in her own selfish wickedness to listen to a prophet. Gomer too had turned a deaf ear to her husband's warnings. Therefore the punishment is just, for Israel like Gomer, had a chance to repent, but refused it. Jehovah will not only bring calamity upon Israel, but slowly and surely she herself is brewing internally a state which will result in complete² moral decay. Jehovah will withdraw all help from Israel,

1 Hosea 5:8.

2 Hosea 5:12.

trusting that eventually Israel will become penitent and once again seek her God. It was this method of separating himself from Gomer, until she could repent of her guilt and renew her covenant with her husband that seemed most effective to Hosea.

So absorbed is Israel in her sin that resolution to follow Jehovah is easily broken. Although Israel will someday become conscious of the healing power of the true God, as contrasted to the destructive tendencies of foreign gods, she is yet too steeped in sin to turn to the true God.¹ "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? For your goodness is as a morning cloud and as the dew that goeth easily away."² No matter how much Israel might determine to live righteously, she is not yet prepared to follow her God; Israel's history is too saturated in crime to permit any less than a gradual reformation. Sin had been a habit with Gomer. Undoubtedly she too had periods of contrition, which were no more lasting than the dew in the morning. The habits of Israel and Gomer would naturally encourage a relapse. How disappointed Jehovah was to find that all Israel was defiled! "I have seen a terrible thing in the house of Israel; there is whoredom of Ephraim, Israel is defiled."³ And how disappointed Hosea must have been to discover that

1 Hosea 6:1.
 2 Hosea 6:4.
 3 Hosea 6:10.

Gomer was thoroughly subjected to idolatry and whoredom.

No sooner does the great physician heal one wound, than another becomes evident. Israel, like Gomer, is too¹ calloused with wickedness to avoid opening a fresh wound.

4.) The prophet believed that some day after a period of suffering Israel will be cleansed, at which time she will turn to Jehovah and say: "What have I to do anymore with idols?"²

Verse one of chapter six reveals an important thought: "Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up." Israel's allies had torn, but had not healed; Jehovah was justified in punishing Israel for the purpose of purification, since He was the only Physician capable of restoring a nation to perfect health. Gomer had been demoralized by idol worship and by fickle lovers, who ravaged her body and soul. At last she discovered that neither her paramours nor the Baal gods would have mercy upon her, but that only Hosea and the true God, Jehovah, would heal her wounds, and restore strength to her broken body. "His going forth is as sure as the morning;"³ that is, the certainty with which Jehovah exercises his punishment for evil and reward for righteousness corresponds to the certainty of a new day to follow the night.

1 Hosea 7:1,2.

2 Hosea 14:8.

3 Hosea 6:3.

Israel, similar to Gomer, had to learn first of the unfaithfulness of her lovers, before she could appreciate the true protector. Now Israel, like Gomer, no longer wishes to follow weak lovers, but chooses to seek the strong, merciful character of an unchanging God. As yet, however, Israel is not fully prepared for righteous living,¹ and she must pass through a period of preparation and purification even as Gomer herself prepared to be united with her husband. It will take time for Israel to recover her God, for her faith is not yet strong enough to compensate for her weaknesses as illustrated by her history.

"I have slain them by the words of my mouth..."² Jehovah lashes Israel with His tongue, hoping that she will come to her senses and fulfill those promises of loyalty to God. Hosea must have spoken harshly to his wife when she refused to give up her lovers.³ "When it is my desire, I will chastise them," promises Jehovah. In chapter ten, Israel is compared to a young heifer, whose life is pleasant enough when treading the corn, and eating according to her wishes; but when the master puts a yoke upon her neck and obliges her to plough and harrow, her life of labor begins. From Israel will be snatched her freedom, and she will be punished for neglecting to worship the provider of this freedom. "I will set a rider on Ephraim;

1 Hosea 6:4.

2 Hosea 6:5.

3 Hosea 10:10.

Judah shall plow, Jacob shall break his clods." ¹ The heifer and Israel resemble Gomer, around whose neck her lovers had placed a yoke to enslave her body and soul. Gomer had paid the penalty. Israel will soon be placed under the yoke of her enemies, the Assyrians, just as Gomer had been enslaved by her lovers; "ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity; ye have eaten the fruit of lies: for thou didst trust in anyway, in the multitude of thy mighty men." ² After the bitter fruit of wickedness has been tasted, Israel will understand the meaning of these beautiful words: "Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap according to mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you." ³

If Hosea had separated himself from his wife merely to satisfy his own selfish desire to show Gomer that he Hosea was, after all, her protector and lover, then his self-denial would have lacked the God-like qualities of which his nature was composed. His self-sacrifice was for the good of Gomer, not for the good of himself, alone. Similarly Jehovah sacrifices His personal desires for the good of Israel. It was not mere justice that prompted Hosea to allow his wife to pay the price for her folly; it was more than that, -- it was mercy and love tempered with justice. The prophet knew that God would never take undue advantage of Israel's weakness; he knew that

1 Hosea 10:11.

2 Hosea 10:13.

3 Hosea 10:12.

God could find no satisfaction in service grudgingly given, any more than the prophet could find happiness in service grudgingly given. How naturally Israel would obey Jehovah if she trusted him! And how easily Gomer would have obeyed Hosea, had her faith in him been verified! Love obeys with delight. The prophet knew that God wanted love from Israel just as Hosea had longed for love from Gomer.

"O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and return unto the Lord; say unto him, Take away iniquity, and accept that which is good; so shall we render as bullocks¹ the offerings of our lips." To a nation suffering in sin, the prophet advises repentance, lest the misery become unbearable, and repentance come too late to remedy. God loves Israel too much to forget her in time of need. If Hosea, being human, loved a wayward wife and willingly forgave her sins, even before she repented, how much easier it will be for God to forgive Israel who is repentant of her sins! All Jehovah asks is that Israel offer her praises and thanksgiving to the true God, and earnestly desire to serve Him in a newness of spirit and wholeness of mind. The prophet tells Israel to submit to Jehovah, and to admit that Ashur will not save her.² By this Israel must know that faith in a king, be he rich or

¹ Hosea 14:1,2.

² Hosea 14:3.

powerful, is unsatisfactory, for true peace of mind cannot be found in desire for wealth, or fear of power. Gomer had trusted in riches and the powers of religious and political leaders, only to discover that she had given the beauty and vitality of her youth to further a program which would in the end cause her death. In the verse which reads: "We will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, ye are our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy,"¹ Hosea admonishes Israel to acknowledge to God that she no longer relies on foreign help, -- that the horses of the Egyptian cavalry cannot deliver her from the hands of the enemies, and that the gods of foreign nations cannot bestow blessings or mercy upon a needy race. The prophet foresaw penitence in his wife. He pleaded with her to forget the Baalim and her lovers, to repent of her sins, and to return to the worship of Jehovah. Israel and Gomer were promised salvation through repentance which would cleanse and blot out past transgressions. Suffering for Gomer and Israel had been intense, but Jehovah who heals and mends broken bodies and spirits will answer the prayers of the desolate, and fatherless, and take them into His family.

"They shall revive as the corn, and blossom as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebenon."² We

1 Hosea 14:3.

2 Hosea 14:7.

are reminded of the prudent use of this metaphor when we think definitely of the process of growth which the grain undergoes. "After the corn has been a short time above the ground, in a single spike the blades begin to separate, and the stalk to spring out of the center. The side leaves turn back to make way for the protruding stalk, and fall bending down to the earth, assuming a withered appearance, though still attached to the plant. To look at the corn in this state, no one, acquainted with the circumstance, could entertain any sanguine hope of a copious harvest. In a short time, other leaves spring out, the former freshen, and begin to stand erect, and the whole seems to revive from a vegetative death.¹" No doubt the Prophet noted the resemblance of Gomer's life to the corn in the field. How could he escape the thought of one whose presence was ever before him? Yes, Israel too was like that field of corn! How synonymous were the names Gomer and Israel! His Gomer was like Jehovah's Israel. Like the corn in its first state of growth, fresh and vital, Gomer and Israel were clean and alive through their covenant with God. But as the corn grows, it loses some of that early vigor and turns to other sources of strength, only to remain for a time in a state of withering, until fresh rains, the sun and earth revive it, and the full corn becomes

1 Clarke's Commentary. Clarke, HB, Vol. III, p. 656.

manifest. This metaphor contains the teaching of Hosea regarding the necessary cleansing previous to the renewal of strength to be gained from communion with Jehovah.

"Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? Prudent, and he shall know them? For the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them; but transgressors shall fall in them."¹ Whoever will endeavor to learn about Jehovah will understand His message of justice, and righteousness, and mercy.

prophecy is estimated accordingly. Chapters one, two and three reveal a period of prosperity, characteristic of the rule of Jeroboam II; while chapters four through fourteen indicate a time of peace, and present characteristics of the period following the reign of Jeroboam II. That the dates for Hosea are approximately 745 B. C., and 726 B. C., we are reasonably certain. Whether or not, Hosea prophesied before 743, we cannot say.

B. Authorship and Authenticity

Hosea is the author of his own book; however, as a prophet of the northern kingdom, in the eighth century, his writings were subject to revisions and additions of the Judean editors of the northern kingdom.

Many critics believe that the following verses were either revised, or added for 1:7; 1:20; 2:1; 3:10; 4:10;

1 Hosea 14:9.

Chapter VI

S-U-M-M-A-R-Y

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I. CRITICAL PROBLEMS:

A. Date:

Since Hosea was a prophet of the northern kingdom during the reign of Jeroboam II and succeeding kings, the date of the prophecy is estimated accordingly. Chapters one, two and three reveal a period of prosperity, characteristic of the rule of Jeroboam II, while chapters four through fourteen indicate a time of chaos, and unrest characteristic of the period following the reign of Jeroboam II. That the dates for Hosea are approximately 743 B. C. and 734 B. C., we are reasonably certain. Whether or not, Hosea prophesied before 743, we cannot say.

B. Authorship and Authenticity:

Hosea is the author of his own book; however, as a prophet of the northern kingdom, in the eighth century, his writings were subject to revisions and additions of the Judean editors of the southern kingdom.

Many critics believe that the following verses were either revised, or added to: 1:7; 1:10; 2:1; 3:5; 4:15a; 5:5; 5:10; 12, 13, 14; 6:4; 6:11; 8:14; 10:11; 11:12b; 12:2;

14. Of the passages listed, 1:7 and 1:10 and 1:10 - 2:1 are most likely to be revisions.

The fragmentary reports included in the book are not necessarily the result of revisions or additions, for Hosea's own style is indicative of a certain abruptness, due to his emotional nature. Although it is important to acknowledge that the interpolations in the book of Hosea are rather frequent, and quite easily detected, yet it is well to keep in mind that the interpolations cannot surpass the quality of the original testimonies. Through his own experience, the prophet was stimulated to produce a story which no interpolator could hide.

II. BIOGRAPHY OF THE PROPHET:

Very little is known about the life of Hosea; however, there are a few details about his life to be gleaned from the prophecy itself. The name, Hosea, means "God's Help." The Prophet is called the son of Beerī, about whom there are no conclusive facts to offer further material concerning the home-life or parentage of Hosea. In 7:5 and 10:3b it is inferred that Hosea was a prophet of the northern kingdom, a region with which he was familiar.

There is not much evidence as to the prophet's priestly relationships, except for his knowledge of the sins of the priests. To say that Hosea must have been a priest because of

this understanding of priestly sins is not in accordance with modern interpreters; nevertheless, it is safe to say that 9:8ff. indicates that the prophet belonged to the Nebiim.

Whether or not Hosea was a peasant, living on the land, we cannot say; many of the teachings are illustrated by agricultural references and denote an interest and knowledge of farming.

No doubt, the experience with Gomer was real, and had much to do with the emotional expressions, as well as the disjointed nature of certain passages of the prophecy. Of his personal history we are told either nothing, or else a great deal, according to the way in which we interpret chapters one through three.

We are told that in Eastern Jordan the prophet's grave is still regarded as a sanctuary.

III. THE MARRIAGE OF HOSEA:

The most frequently discussed interpretations of the marriage include the following three:

1.) that the marriage was merely a vision; 2.) that the account is an allegory; 3.) that the experience was real.

A. The Visionary Interpretation.

The idea that the marriage was merely a vision is not based on sufficient facts to give it authority. The story of Hosea's marriage is too vivid and too complicated to

be a vision. If the experience was visionary, Hosea must have been an ecstatic and we have no cause to believe that the Prophet was possessed with such characteristics; nevertheless, he "beheld" as did other prophets of his time; it was common for prophets to say, "I beheld," or "I heard," as a means of expression, and perhaps as a way of arousing interest. Undoubtedly, the prophets received inspiration from visions, but to follow all directions received from visions would be impossible. Ezekiel, for example, was commanded to eat the role, recording lamentations, woe, and mourning, and he says: "Then did I eat it." (3:3)

B. The Allegorical Interpretation:

Some critics believe that the account is an allegory, since in every instance the reference is to a lesson to be drawn from the story. Some believe that nothing is gained by calling the experience real, since the story is valuable without the note of actuality. Others maintain that the prophet would not flaunt the example of immorality in his own family if it were a true occurrence, lest he defeat any denunciations of evil which he might present. These same critics maintain that marriage with a woman unchaste would be morally incongruous. That the woman in chapter one is not the same as the woman in chapter three is another argument for the allegorical view. Certain commentators have concluded that the three

children were descriptions of definite portions of the history of Israel, Gomer, herself, symbolizing the nation Israel.

C. The literal Interpretation:

If numbers are significant, it is well to say that the majority of present-day critics consider the experiences as an actual fact.

In the literal interpretation it is assumed that the woman of chapter one is the same as the woman of chapter three. Some critics say that the Prophet knew that Gomer was unchaste before he married her, and others say that she was not unfaithful until after marriage. It is probable that Gomer was a member of one of the Asiatic cults which sponsored prostitution, and that Hosea believing her to be a "holy woman," considered it right to purchase her for a wife, and so redeem her from her sin.

The story is told so vividly, and the details are related in so matter-of-fact a manner, that the experience could hardly have been other than actual.

Some critics say that those who object to the "immoral nature" of the marriage experience, might just as well object to the story as an allegory to teach an object-lesson.

For those who accept the literal interpretation, it should be added that it is not necessary to accept the idea that Gomer was immoral previous to her marriage. The word

ēsheth zenūnīm is class descriptive and does not mean ishshāh zōnāh, or a harlot-woman. It is probable that Hosea reviewing his total marriage experience saw that from the first there were indications of harlotry in Gomer. This is the proleptic view, and is logical in interpretation.

There is no particular symbolism evident in the name Gomer bath Diblaim; likewise, the second child (5:6), a girl, rather than a boy, has no particular symbolical significance; it was customary for prophets to give their children symbolical names (Is. 7:3; 8:3).

Finally, the message of Hosea is best explained as the outcome of his own personal experience.

There are those who agree that the experience was real but who disagree concerning the character of the wife in her relation to her husband.

a.) Some say that Gomer was a harlot, but this idea is contradictive to the dominant note in the teachings of Hosea. Israel was pure at the time of her union with Yahweh; later she became sinful. Gomer is comparable to Israel, and she too must have been pure at the beginning of marriage.

b.) Some have said that Gomer might have been a sacred prostitute, and this is possible and logically explained.

c.) There are those who consider Gomer a concubine of Hosea's, but this view has very little foundation.

d.) A few argue that Hosea used the narrative of an unhappy home life as an allegory, and that his wife was in reality a pure woman; however, this is very unlikely, since the prophet would not be likely to risk his wife's reputation and love in this manner.

e.) Many say that Gomer's immoral tendencies were not known to the prophet until after marriage, and this is very possible; it makes the acceptance of the story less objectionable.

The story related in chapters one through three tells of Hosea's marriage to Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim. The first child, a son was called in memory of Jehu's murders, Jezreel; the second child, a daughter, was named Lo- ruhamah ("no-love"); and the third child, a son was named, Lo- ammi ("not my kin"). Because Gomer was unfaithful and followed the lures of paramours, she was forced to leave home, only to become thoroughly debauched and miserable. In the slave market, Hosea purchased her and took her home, where she was to be purified before her reunion with her husband. From this experience the prophet gained a new insight into the relationship between Jehovah and Israel as compared to the relationship between Hosea and Gomer.

IV. THE MAJOR TEACHINGS OF THE BOOK OF HOSEA:

The major teachings may be classified under the headings of: 1.) religious; 2.) political; and 3.) social.

A. Religious Teachings:

1. The religious condemnation of Hosea centered about the priesthood. The priests had withheld the knowledge of God from the people. They feed on the sacrifices, and pervert the minds of those who desire to worship. The prostitutes are a part of the sacrificial services of the sanctuaries, and the priests themselves betray their sensual character when they sacrifice with prostitutes, and set thus the immoral example.

2. Hosea grasped the significance of true worship. He believed that sacrifices availed nothing without the actual communion of man with God. Outwardly the Israelites worship Jehovah, but in reality they are corrupting the whole system of Jehovah worship.

3. Concerning Hosea's teaching as to the nature of Yahweh, there are several points worth noting. Hosea believes that there is one God, of supreme power, who loves as a father, and as a husband, and who heals as a physician; not only is Yahweh a God of love; but He is a God of righteousness and exercises justice and punishment for evil. This punishment, however, is for the purpose of purification.

B. Political Teachings:

1. Hosea unflinchingly condemned the government of his people. The unrighteous and selfish leaders bring doom upon themselves as well as upon the nation.

2. The prophet attempted to show the futility of alliances with foreign nations which seek to further their own gains at the expense of Israel. The foreign gods are a horrible menace.

C. Social Teachings:

1. The moral degeneracy is beyond repair. Punishment and purification are necessary before Israel can realize the presence of Jehovah.

2. Personal purity is needed in order to attain national purity.

3. Sin has become an insidious habit in Israel, and it is too late to remedy other than through punishment.

4. After punishment, Israel will be cleansed, and will sense her obligation to Jehovah.

V. THE RELATION OF HOSEA'S MARRIAGE TO HIS TEACHINGS:

A. Religious Teachings in relation to the marriage experience.

1. The priests are nothing but a troop of robbers who trap victims, innocent as his own wife Gomer. The hypocrisy of the priests has ensnared many who follow the

leadership of these men.

2. To consult wooden gods is not true worship, and brings only disaster. Gomer illustrated this fact in her worship of foreign gods.

3. The prophet had a definite conception of God, as a loving, righteous merciful husband and father. If Hosea being human loved Gomer so faithfully, how much more faithfully does God being super-human, love Israel? Both Jehovah and Hosea (in the prophet's mind) were victims of unrequited love.

B. Political Teachings in relation to the Marriage Experience.

1. The government of Israel is the source of vice and shame. Hadn't Gomer followed the examples set by kings and princes who lived licentiously?

2. Just as disaster came to Gomer who neglected her husband for foreign lovers, so disaster will come to Israel, who has forgotten Jehovah for foreign gods.

C. Social Teachings in relation to the Marriage Experience.

1. The prophet condemned the moral degeneracy of Israel, for he knew that destruction would follow lasciviousness. Gomer had been the means of her own destruction.

2. Personal purity, strong enough to overcome

B-I-B-L-I-O-G-R-A-P-H-Y

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